

ALL CHILDREN IN SCHOOL BY 2015

Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children



România



ROMANIA COUNTRY STUDY

Analysing the situation of out of school children in Romania

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

5DE	– Five Dimensions of Exclusion
ANAR	– Adjusted net attendance rate
ANER	– Adjusted net enrolment rate
ANPC	– National Authority for Child Protection
ARACIP	– National Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education
CCD	– Teacher Training Centre
CJRAE	– Country Centre for Resources and Educational Assistance
CMF	– Conceptual and Methodological Framework
ECCE	– Early Childhood and Care Education
EFA	– Education for All
EU	– European Union
GAR	– Gross attendance rate
GDP	–Gross domestic product
GER	–Gross enrolment rate
GPI	–Gender parity index
ICCV	– Institute for the Quality of Life
ILO	– International Labour Organization
INS	– National Institute of Statistics
ISCED	– International Standard Classification of Education
ISE	– Institute of Education Sciences
ISJ	– County School Inspectorate
MECTS	– Ministry of Education, Research and Youth
MMSSF	– Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family
MDR	– Ministry of Regional Development
NAR	– Net attendance rate
NER	–Net enrolment rate
NGO	–Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	– Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSC	– Out-of-school children
OOSCI	– Out-of-School Children Initiative
PPP	–Purchasing power parity
SEN	– Special Education Needs
UCW	–Understanding Children’s Work
UIS	– UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	– United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	– United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	– United Nations Children’s Fund
UNPD	– United Nations Population Division

INTRODUCTION

Overview of OOSC Initiative

Building on a joint report which introduced the typology of out-of-school children and disaggregated data analysis in 2005, UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) launched at the beginning of 2010a **Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children** in order to stimulate more complex and more informed and monitored policy responses related to exclusion from education¹. The Initiative aims at working with 26 countries (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Sri Lanka, North and South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Tajikistan, Turkey and Zambia) for an in-depth analysis of the situation of out of school children, including the factors of exclusion from schooling and existing policies focused on enhanced participation.

The UIS (2010)² estimates that there were 61 million primary school age children and 71 million lower secondary school age children in the world out of school in 2010. According to a recent joint UIS-Global Monitoring report factsheet there has been a stagnation in the global number of out-of-school children in the past 5 years, however, 56 million primary school age children could not be in school in 2015 (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011). Global and regional data on trends with out-of-school children show that whilst the situation has improved over the past decade there is a strong need for a more systematic approach to address the problem of out-of-school children and guide concrete education sector reforms in this regard.

Designed to reach a better understanding of existing data, the initiative is particularly important for researching the situation of the most disadvantaged OOSC. Profiling children out of school is currently limited to only some characteristics making difficult the task of identifying and addressing the multiple and overlapping forms of exclusion and disparities that affect them. This multi-dimensionality of disparities makes it extremely difficult to formulate and adequately support multi-sectoral policies for countries trying to address the issue.

The Global Initiative is contributing therefore to the development of national studies based on the work of national teams (consisting of government partners and key decision-makers), as well as to national capacity strengthening related to the collection and management of education statistics and to policy analysis and strategy development. The country studies will feed into regional overviews, a global study and a global conference to leverage resources for equity.

Romania's context: geographical, social and economic background

Romania is a relatively large country (238,391 km²) located in Eastern Europe, in the Northern part of the Balkans. The neighbour countries are Hungary (in West), Ukraine and Republic of Moldova (North and North-East), Serbia (South-West) and Bulgaria (South). According to the official demographic

¹UNICEF and UIS, *Conceptual And Methodological Framework*, March 2011 version.

² UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Data Centre, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>.

statistics, Romania has a population of nearly 22 million inhabitants, with a large majority of Romanian ethnics (around 90%). Other important minorities are Hungarian (6.6%) and Roma minority (2.5%). Almost 4 million Romanian citizens are currently working in other European countries, mainly Spain (0.8 million workers estimated) and Italy (0.6 millions). Fertility rate is 1.4, slightly lower than the EU member states average (1.5.)



After the second-world war, in 1947 Romanian king Mihai I was forced to leave the country by the Soviet Union's puppet Government, opening almost 50 years of one of the most tyrannical communist regimes in Eastern Block. Romania became a democratic country after the Revolution sparked in Timisoara in 16th of December, 1989 and continued in Bucharest in 21st-22nd of December. The dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was killed together with his wife during the change of regime events after a summary trial, putting an end to the street fights that killed more than 1000 persons. After communism, another period of hardships for a large part of the population started, with the difficult process of restructuring the economy to the free market rules and adaptation to a Parliamentary democratic regime. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and became in January 2007 a Member of European Union jointly with Bulgaria, offering a new perspective for social and economic development.

From an administrative point of view, the country has 263 cities and 2685 villages (*comune*) being organised in 41 counties and Bucharest city. The regional level emerged in the public policymaking only after 1989, when escaping a hyper-centralised system of government and under the influence of the accession process and regional policies of EU. Eight development regions were defined, partly following historical regions of Romania (see map below). The main regional development structures in Romania were created at national and regional level (such as the Regional Development Agency and Ministry of Regional Development) but in 2011 the Government proposed for public debate a new administrative organisation model, considering the current one not being effective.

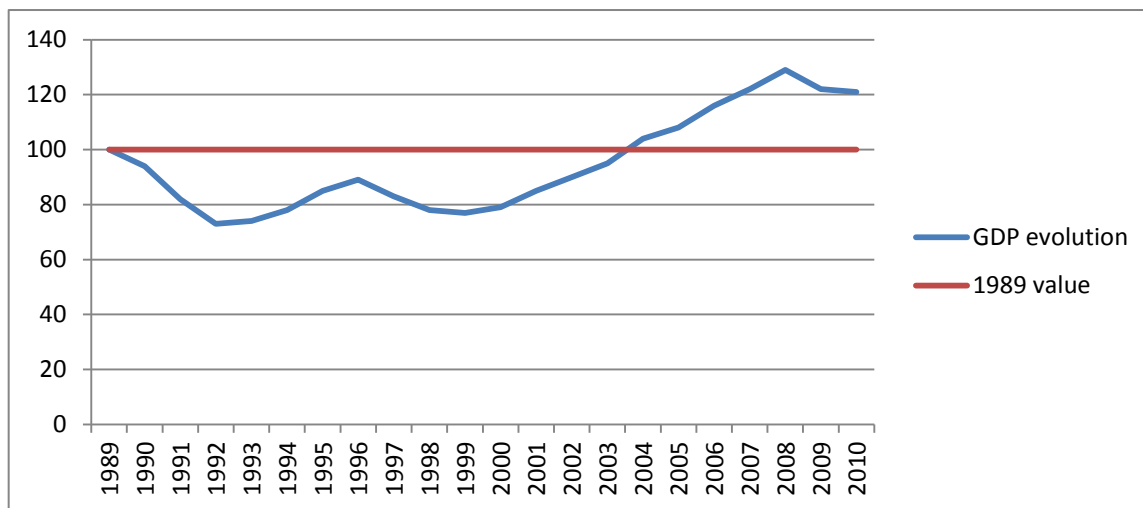


A special feature of Romania is the large share of its population living in rural areas (46%), significantly higher compared with EU average (24%). As we will see, this fact is relevant for our analysis, given the marked differences in the living conditions but also in the quality of social services provision (including education) between the two areas of residence.

Economic context

The economic gap between Romania and the other EU Member states is reflected by the high difference of GDP per capita (currently around 41% of the EU average). Romania needed almost 15 years to reach the same level of GDP as compared with 1989 (Figure 1) and since 2008 the GDP increase trend has stopped - at the same time as the global economic recession. Forecasts are indicating 2011 as the year of regaining the positive trend in GDP increase, but strong positive signs of economic growth are not visible yet.

Figure 1. GDP per capita evolution in Romania, 1989 - 2010 (1989 = 100%)

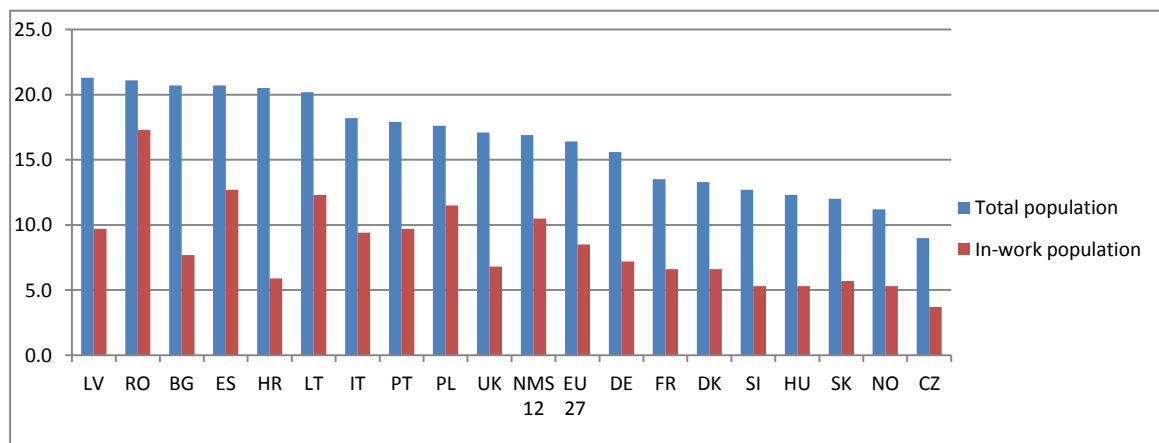


Source: ICCV, 2011

There is also a higher inequality in revenues compared with EU average (including Romania): S80/S20 indicator has a value of 5.3 compared with 4.8, while Gini coefficient has a value of 35% compared with 0.30% the EU average (2009 data).

According to EUROSTAT, more than a fifth of population is at risk of poverty (defined as equivalised income below the threshold of 60% of the national equivalised median income): 22% compared with 16% at EU level. Romanians ranking second after Lithuania in EU (Fig 2) and prospects of improvement according to ICCV forecasts are still far in terms of time. Eurostat data are demonstrating that the risk is affecting also almost a fifth of the working population, indicating that holding a job is not securing enough earnings for a decent living. The same source indicates that 33% of the population up to 16 years old is at poverty risk while the same indicator for population aged 65 and over is around 20%.

Figure 2. Poverty risk rate in EU Member States (% total and working population), 2010



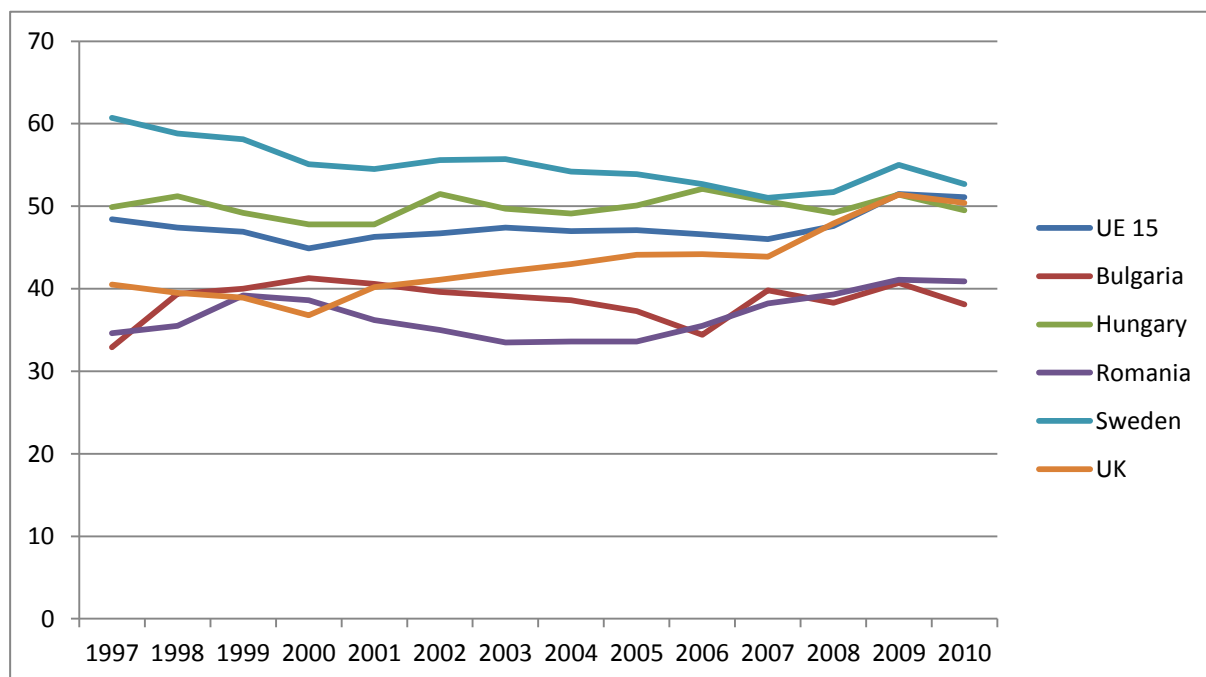
Source: Eurostat, epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu

Poverty is affecting specific categories of population, such as different ethnic minorities. The most disadvantaged is Roma minority, World Bank (2010) indicating that the poverty rate among this minority reaches 67%. More than 50% of Roma and 60% of Roma communities are living with less than 4.30 USD/day and 21% with less than 2.15 USD/day. Also a large majority of Roma communities (74%) are confronting with severe revenues challenges and 23% are currently not connected to electricity and/or running water (ICCV, 2011). As we will detail in the report, the situation is also directly influencing the school attendance of Roma children.

The percentage of poverty perception is the highest in EU (in 2009 more than 90% of Romanians declared that they consider the poverty is generalised in Romania - ICCV, 2011). This subjective view seems to entail that Romania still struggles for finding the means to finance its social policies and its social assistance measures, with one of the lowest total public expenditures level in EU (Fig. 3).

The negative impact of the economic crisis on public social expenditures is important, education not being an exception. Moreover, social expenditures are lower than what is required, with an average of 17% of GDP in 2000-2007 (Eurostat, 2008). As a share in public expenditures, social expenditures in Romania account for 37%, while the EU average is 56.2%.

Figure 3. Total public expenditures in EU as % of GDP (1997 - 2009)



Source: Eurostat

Despite clear provisions of the national legislation, the public financing of education was constantly under 4% of GDP. Both pre-university and university levels faced financing difficulties, especially in what concerns the investment in school infrastructure, modern teaching materials and equipment and programs of support for categories of risk (i.e. supporting staff for children with disabilities, school mediators, provision of counselling and guidance services etc.). Current estimations indicate that for closing the gap compared with the budget allocations for education as GDP percentage requires an increase of over 25% of these public funds in Romania (ICCV, 2011).

According to World Health Organisation reports, the medical system in Romania is lagging behind other EU states, with indicators such as infant mortality rate six times higher than Nordic countries. The rural areas seems to be the most severely affected, INS and UNICEF reports indicating an infant mortality rate four times higher compared with the urban areas (INS, 2011).

Structure of the education system and main stakeholders

According to the new Law of Education (1/2011) the educational system is divided along two main levels. As presented in the Annex 2, the pre-university level (*învățământul preuniversitar*) is structured in the following cycles: early school level (*educație ante-preșcolară*), kindergarten (*grădiniță* or *învățământul preșcolar*) – composed of three grades (*grupamică*, *grupamijlocie* and *grupa mare*); primary school (*învățământul primar*) comprises five grades³: the preparatory grade (*grupapregătitoare*)

³The data for the primary level in this report is not including the preparatory year.

and grades I to IV; lower secondary (*gimnaziu*) - grades V to IX and upper secondary (*liceu teoretic, vocational and tehnologic*) - four or five grades (grades X to XII/XIII) with a theoretical, vocational or technological track (the last one offering students professional qualifications). The majority of children with special educational needs are integrated in mainstream schools. However, about a third of these children go to special schools, mainly students with more severe handicap.

The education levels the most important for the Out-of-School Initiative study are ISCED 0, ISCED 1 and ISCED 2, covering the pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels. Since 2011, when the new law of education was introduced, the education system structure was changed. However, this report uses the structure applicable in the reference period (2005-2010), as detailed in the Annex 2 of the report.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education (*învățământ postliceal și de maiștri*) – ISCED 4, includes programmes for technical and foreman positions. Higher education (*învățământ superior*) is organized according to the principles of the Bologna process, which aims at the construction of the European higher education area. It has the following components, corresponding to ISCED 5 and 6: Bachelor (*licență*) 3 years in most disciplines; Master (*masterat*) 2 years in most disciplines; doctorate (*doctorat*) at least 3 years and continuous training programs (*curșuripostuniversitare, formare continuă*).

According the National Institute of Statistics data, in 2009/10, the total enrolled school population was 4,176,866 students with the following distribution by level of education: pre-school education 666,123 students, primary education 845,679, lower secondary education 873,997, vocational education 115,445, high-school 837,728, post-secondary education (not tertiary) and foremen education 62,575 and higher education 775,319.

As already indicated, according to new regulations, compulsory school includes the primary level (preparatory year and grades I to IV) and lower secondary (grades V to IX). Private pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education is available mostly in urban areas and covers only a small minority of children (INS, 2011).

The official language of instruction is Romanian but, for all levels, in all districts where an ethnic minority exceeds 10% of the total population, free public schooling is provided in that language. Some of the classes are taught in that language, and the language and literature of the ethnic group is "the main language studied", although Romanian remains compulsory. Existing classes for different linguistic minorities include: Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, German, Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Turkish, and Ukrainian. According to the provisions of the new law, primary education in mother tongue is guaranteed to national minorities and for secondary education, classes in the languages of national minorities are organised upon the request of parents and guardians. Also the new provisions of the law offer specific support for pupils with special education needs.

General introduction to the 5DE in Romania

The specificity of the Romanian study in relation to the global study is given by the current system of monitoring the OOSC and also by available data. Moreover, as it will be indicated in the study, most of the children out of school in Romania had a prior experience of attending school. This situation is indicated by the rather high enrolment rates in pre-primary and primary level and also by the drop-out

rates registered in primary and lower secondary levels. Therefore, the focus of our study is mainly on dropouts and non-attendance, rather than children who have never gone to school.

Due to the fact that no recent survey data are available on profiles of out of school children, some of the characteristics were difficult to be in-depth explored (i.e. family-context, school *results*, individual characteristics etc.). The recommendation section of our report offers several policy areas for improving the existing level of information in relation with children that are out of school, in particular for the categories of students at risk identified. Moreover, our report strongly underlines the need to focus more on prevention rather than intervention measures, both at national and local level, and also to better target policies at groups of children at risk.

In particular the national policies should offer an equal importance to *attendance* and not only to *enrolment* data, since there is a huge information gap on the risk factors on assuring a constant attendance for categories of students at risk.

Methodology of the national report

The methodology of the national report, detailed in the following chapter is closely following the approach outlined in the Conceptual and Methodological Framework of the OOSCI. The starting point of data analysis was the National Institute of Statistics (INS) available data on enrolment and drop out for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary level (period covered being 2005-2009). As detailed in Annex 3, the INS data is collected through an exhaustive survey in all public and private educational establishments in Romania. The survey is based on research tools (questionnaires) agreed by the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Institute of Statistics and it is conducted at the beginning and the end of the school year. The data are collected from all types of educational establishments and from all levels of education and by their use are treated as administrative data.

Sample design and data collection coverage is therefore national, macro-regional, regional, county and town/commune. The data on school population is collected/disaggregated by gender, age, teaching language, area of residence (urban/rural), level of education, geographic area, type of school (public, private), grade. For some indicators, other types of disaggregation may be used: i.e. by specialisations/qualifications, ethnic origin, Romanian students/foreign students, etc.

The main results of the survey are published yearly by the National Institute of Statistics in statistical reviews such as: Primary and Lower Secondary Education (beginning and end of school year), Upper Secondary Education, Special Education or in syntheses such as The Education System of Romania, Yearly Romanian Statistical Book, etc. At request, the National Institute of Statistics database (TEMPO) can also be accessed. All questionnaires are available in word and excel formats at INS website.

The definition of an out-of-school child used in the INS survey is the following: a child who is of school age but is not enrolled in any educational or vocational program. The drop-out is defined in this context as the case when a student enrolled at the beginning of a school year stops attending the classes and fails to finalise that year. Drop-out rate indicator is calculated therefore as the ratio between the school population enrolled at the beginning of the school year and the number of students enrolled at the end of the year.

However, the schools are reporting data also based on the "administrative" definition of drop-out, stating that a student is officially considered as drop-out only when he/she is more than two years older than the official age corresponding to a specific grade. The lack of clarity and precision in definitions and insufficient harmonisation/coherence between relevant definitions/regulations lead to methodological dysfunctions/problems. These comprise the inaccurate/ambiguous definition of students' academic status in grade book sections and the lack of harmony/coherence between definitions and rules on how non-attendance should be documented (drop-out, withdrawal, grade retention, other situations, etc.) as specified in the Organisation and Operating Rules, in the instructions on completing specific grade book sections, and in the guidelines for completing school participation statistical questionnaires (SQs) administered by INS.

Another data source, in relation with the economic background of the students is the **Household Budget Survey (HBS)**, conducted also by INS. The data are collected each month on a sub-sample of 3,120 households. The sampling unit is the household. Sampling (the smallest administrative area for which out-of-school population data are statistically accurate) or regional coverage of schools (NUTS-II level). The periodicity of data is Quarterly and Annually. The data may be disaggregated by gender, age, area, wealth quintile.

The definition of out-of-school children used in this survey is the following: school-age population with other occupational status than that of students. The collected, processed and aggregated statistical data are published and disseminated on a quarterly and yearly basis. The main limitations arising from the specificity of the HBS questionnaire are the following:

- The students who never attended pre-primary education could not be accurately identified; this situation is due to the fact that in the case of the information regarding the family members' current status the answer options in the questionnaire do not include the status *enrolled in kindergarten*.
- For family members who are over 15 years of age, the school enrolment situation cannot be accurately detected as the data collection tool focuses on their situation on the labour market (employed/unemployed) and not on their school situation (enrolled/not enrolled in education).

If data included in the OOSC tables was not available (e.g. data on ethnic origin), additional sources were used where available, including official data provided by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (MECTS) and National Authority for Child Protection (ANPC) or data from relevant thematic reports conducted on representative samples of population. The years used in this case are different,

In order to better understand the existing data, specific individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in policies relevant of OOSC, both from national, county and regional level⁴. In particular the report used the input of decision-makers and experts from MECTS (Directorate for LLL), ANPC, Institute of Education Sciences (ISE) and INS.

* * *

⁴ Interviews were conducted with representatives of the county structures of MECTS (Country School Inspectorates, CJRAE and CCD) from Neamț, Brașov, Caraș-Severin, Arad, Ilfov and București.

The current report will explore current challenges and barriers in developing and diversifying educational opportunities to reintroduce young people who left school prematurely in the system. A particular attention is given to the new policy developments related to: multiplying the second-chance programs; implementing Community Lifelong Learning Centres created by the new Law of National Education; using the opportunities for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. lifelong learning portfolios, access to competence assessment and certification services etc.) but also other grassroots initiatives aiming at promoting efficient information and access to continuous training opportunities.

The Report is therefore more than a dynamic picture of the children who dropped out or are at risk of dropping out, exploring the effectiveness of current policies aiming at ensuring equal opportunities and facilitating access to quality education and training in school education. Moreover, the analysis is also focused on the administrative capacity of the institutions that coordinate the national education system and development of human capital in the education system and on the main existing programs aiming at ensuring a coherent and modern framework for the functional parameters of the system, including management capacity, teacher training and appropriate physical and financial resources.

The current research which focuses on children not attending school from primary and lower secondary level is extremely relevant for the Romanian education system. After more than four years of delays, revisions and constitutional complaints a new, complex reform is currently implemented at all system level, following the new **Law of Education Act (1/2011)**: secondary legislation is developed (methodologies, guidelines, tools), institutional settings are changed, new priorities are set while the new policy context places a special emphasis on equal chances and access to education and training of children from groups at risk of social exclusion

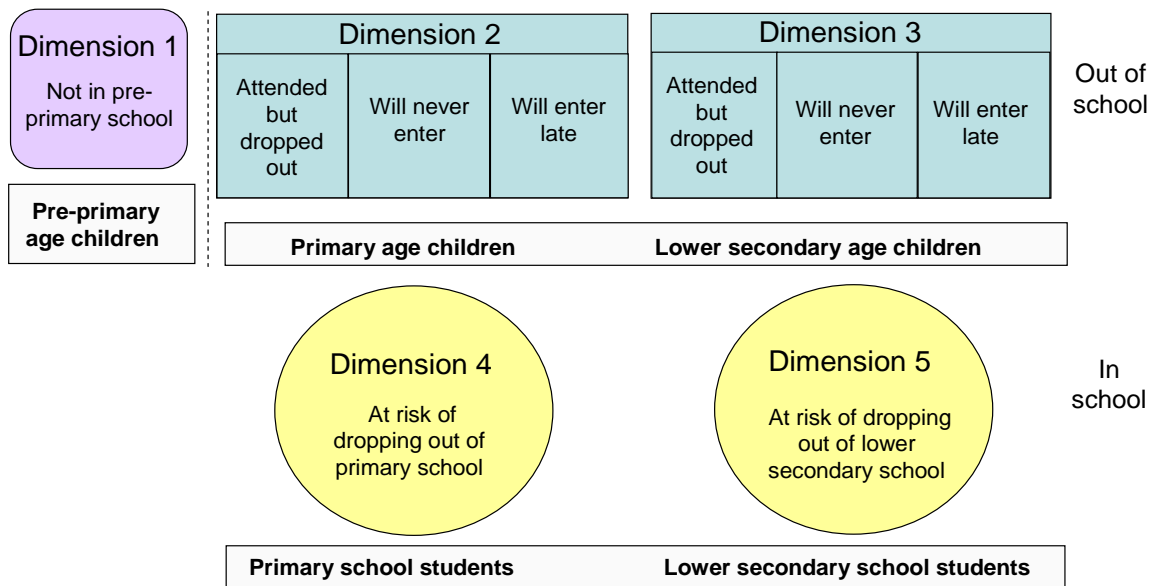
At the same time, at **European level**, *Europe 2020 Strategy* sets the target for the share of early leavers in the education and training system under 10% by 2020. Romania set as objective of lowering the rate of early school leavers in the education and training system to achieve the percentage of 14.8% by 2014, 12.8% by 2017 and 11.3% by 2020. Ensuring equal access to education and training is one of the most important policy intervention areas indicated by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth together with quality assurance and increasing the efficiency of the national education system, ensuring a fair, stable, predictable and sustainable education system and encouraging lifelong learning. The Eurydice Report (2011) indicates that the objective depends among others on the favourable evolution of the economy, with effects on the possibilities of socially and economically disadvantaged families to support participation in education and also on the capacity of the central and local authorities to promote relevant policies for children and families at risk. Our analysis aims at offering a useful review of existing children needs in relation with school attendance, of main challenges hindering participation to education and effectiveness of policies currently targeting these children.

The understanding of the main dimensions of exclusion was inspired by the Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) of the OOSC initiative. According to the CMF, there are **five main dimensions of exclusion**, including two dimensions that capture the out-of-school population of primary school age (Dimension 2) and lower secondary school age (Dimension 3). Pre-primary education is represented by Dimension 1, which highlights children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary education. The approach includes also Dimensions 4 and 5 that focus on children who are in school but are at risk of dropping out.

The assumption of the global initiative and of the Romanian report is that understanding more about these groups of children is key for reintegration in the education and training system and/or for preventing them from becoming the out-of-school children of tomorrow. Combining the *out-of-school* and *at-risk* dimensions, it is possible to set out specific groups of children who are not participating in the intended level of education for the intended duration and at the intended age. The Five Dimensions listed below are displayed in Figure 4.

The Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE)
Dimension 1: Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school
Dimension 2: Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school
Dimension 3: Children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school
Dimension 4: Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out
Dimension 5: Children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out

Figure 4. Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE)



Dimension 1 represents a group of children who do not benefit from pre-primary education and who may therefore not be adequately prepared for primary education, placing them at risk of not entering into primary education or, if they do enter, at risk of dropping out. Although pre-primary education programmes may be longer than one year, the 5DE propose a standard approach for all countries by focusing on pre-primary participation of children in the year preceding the official entrance age into primary school.

Each of the out-of-school **Dimensions 2 and 3** is divided into three mutually exclusive categories based on previous or future school exposure: children who attended in the past and dropped out, children who will never enter school, and children who will enter school in the future. This typology of children out of school is adopted from the 2005 report by UIS and UNICEF. OOSC of primary or lower secondary age who completed primary education are distinguished from children who did not complete the full primary cycle before leaving school. These groups of children are identified separately within the out-of-school Dimensions 2 and 3.

Children in **Dimensions 4 and 5** – those in school but at risk of exclusion from education – are grouped by the level of education they attend, regardless of their age: primary (Dimension 4) or lower secondary (Dimension 5). This is different from Dimensions 2 and 3, which group out-of-school children by their age: primary age (Dimension 2) and lower secondary age (Dimension 3). The framework thus covers two different types of populations: the population of out-of-school children of school-going age, and the population of at-risk pupils of any age in primary or lower secondary school.

Chapter 1: Profiles of Excluded Children

1.1. Profiles of Children in Dimension 1

For the reference period of this Report (2005-2009), **the share of pre-primary age children (3-6 years old) out of school** accounts for 18-20% of the total number of children of this age over the five-year period of analysis. The trend, with some variations, is indicating a slight decrease, mainly due to the increase of school enrolment in rural areas in recent years – Table 1.

Following the Conceptual and Methodological Framework, **in the case six years old children** in Dimension 1 - one year younger than Primary entrance age – around 14,000 children are out of school, based on UIS/INS calculations, in 2009. This accounts for 6.4% of total population of this age, the value of the indicator placing Romania close to Belarus, Republic of Moldova, and Bulgaria from CEE/CIS countries.

Table 1: Percentage of pre-primary age children (3-6) in pre-primary or primary education, by gender and other characteristics, 2009/2010

	<i>Not enrolled</i>	<i>Enrolled in pre-primary school</i>	<i>Enrolled in primary school</i>	<i>Enrolled in either pre-primary or primary</i>
	Male			
Urban	16.79	78.98	4.23	83.21
Rural	20.86	74.20	5.12	79.14
Total	18.76	76.58	4.66	81.24
	Female			
Urban	15.71	79.60	4.69	84.29
Rural	19.19	75.15	5.66	80.81
Total	17.40	77.44	5.16	82.60

Source: INS, 2011

The share of pre-primary age boys (3-6 years) not enrolled in pre-primary or primary education accounts for approximately 19 -20%, showing a decreasing trend: from 20.36% during the 2005/2006 school year to 18.76% in 2009/2010. For girls, the indicator reaches values of nearly 18% in the first two years of the period and 17.4% in the last three years. Hence, as indicated in the Table 1 above, the

share of pre-primary age children enrolled in pre-primary or primary education for school year 2009/2010 does not show important **gender-based** differences (GPI =1.02).

The number of children out of school from rural areas is continuing to be higher in comparison with those from urban areas, both in the case of boys and girls. For example, the indicator value for boys is 3 percentage points higher in urban areas than in rural areas. However, the general trend is a reduction in these differences: from approximately 7 percentage points in the 2005/2006 school year (16.2% in urban areas and 23.4% in rural areas) to 4 percentage points in 2009/2010 (16.7% and 20.8% respectively). The diminution of differences is mainly generated by a drop in the share of children not attending school in rural areas (from 23.4% to 20.8%), while in urban areas the indicator value is constantly around 16-17%.

Residential differences are also noticed in girls: for those who live in urban areas, the analysed indicator accounts for approximately 14-15%, whereas for rural girls it gets to 20-22%. During the 2005/2006 school year, the greatest difference is actually reported – 8.22 percentage points. Still, this difference takes a significant dive to less than half in the last year of the reference period – 3.48 percentage points, as a direct consequence of the reforms in the early education field, in general, and in development of rural education, in particular (a clear picture of these policies is presented in the Chapter 3 of the Report).

The data analysis for the reference period also highlights the fact that the share of pre-primary age children not attending school, both in the case of boys and of girls, is generally below 20%, with a decreasing trend in the last years of the reference period. The value of the indicator in question is higher in rural areas, both in boys and in girls, though showing the same declining trend.

The data indicated by the Household Budget Survey (HBS), indicates a range of differences in relation with the economic background of the pre-primary age children not attending school. As a general trend, these differences can be observed in the category of **children from the poorest quintile** and from the other categories, ranging between **2 and 6 percentage points**. The influence of the resources of the family remains however to be further researched due to the limitations of HBS methodology⁵ (see also Annex 3 of the Report).

Data on **Roma children** from a recent survey co-ordinated by the NGO RomaniCriss conducted on a sample of Roma adults with at least one out of school child (N=985)⁶ indicates a major gap concerning the participation at pre-primary education between the total pre-school age population and Roma minority. The results of the survey published in 2011⁷, based on data collected in December 2009 – January 2010, highlights the disadvantaged situation Roma children currently face: the specific

⁵The students who never attended pre-primary education could not be accurately identified; this situation is due to the fact that in the case of the information regarding the family members' current status the answer options in the questionnaire does not include the status *enrolled in kindergarten*.

⁶ In the sample were included 56 Roma compact communities from 30 counties (out of existing 41) and Bucharest city. The size of the sub-samples corresponds to the shares of the population based on 2002 census data.

⁷ Laura Surdu (coord.), *Participare, absenteism școlar și experiența discriminării în cazul romilor din România* [Attendance, absenteeism and the discrimination experience in the case of Roma in Romania], Romani Criss, UNICEF, Bucharest, 2011.

enrolment rates for the pre-school age are ranging between 4% (in the case of 3 years old) and 23% (in the case of 6 years old).

Table 1b. % Roma children of pre-primary age from families with at least one out-of-school child enrolled in pre-primary or primary education (%), by age and level (ISCED 0 and 1)

Age	Pre-school level (ISCED 0)	Primary level (ISCED 1)
3	4.3 (N = 116)	0.0
4	10.1(N = 128)	0.0
5	15.6 (N = 146)	0.0
6	22.9 (N = 118)	5.0 (N = 118)

Source: Romani Criss, 2011

In comparison with the INS data calculated for all children of pre-primary school age (3-6 years old) enrolled in pre-primary or primary education (Table 1c), we could observe that in the case of children in Dimension 1 (6 years old) the gap in enrolment is more than 55 p.p. in the case of children in pre-school level and around 15 p.p. in the case of primary level, indicating a clear disadvantaged situation of the Roma children.

Table 1c. Children of pre-primary age enrolled in pre-primary or primary education, by age and level (ISCED 0 and 1)

Age	Pre-school level (ISCED 0)	Primary level (ISCED 1)
3	61.7	0.0
4	78.9	0.0
5	86.4	0.0
6	79.7	19.2

Source: INS, 2011

Due to the current difficulties in identifying the total number of Roma children we could not accurately assess the share of children of this minority in the total share of pre-school age children not attending school. In a comprehensive report of Roma, Fleck and Rughiniş discuss in detail the complex problem of auto and hetero-identification of Roma population (2008, p.45-51), highlighting the main causes leading to this challenge⁸. Nevertheless we could notice that the survey data indicates a worrying situation, with a huge enrolment gap between the general population and Roma children. Since the lack of school experience before enrolling in the primary education is one of the main risk factors for dropping out, this situation calls into attention the need for developing the policies aiming at closing the gap and offering the Roma children this experience.

⁸ The study is available at: http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/Publicatii/Vino_mai_aproape.pdf.

The economic and social disadvantage seems to increase even further the risk of children in dimension 1, the main reasons given by the Roma parents in relation with the non-schooling situation of their pre-school age children are related to the lack of resources (mainly clothes, shoes and food). However, there are also parents expressing their belief that small children are better off at home and that they have to take the children with them when migrating for work in another area. Also there are issues related to the discriminatory attitudes of the majority population or the supply of pre-primary education (i.e. the distance to kindergarten, lack of transport facilities, insufficient study space etc.).

The same survey indicates that the situation seems to be equally difficult for Roma children living in rural and in urban areas, while there are no important gender differences. However, the evidence to support these findings should be further detailed by new research. At the same time, it should be investigated if the small regional disparities observed in the case of the total pre-school population not attending school are higher in the case of Roma children.

No official recent data on children with disability of pre-school age not attending kindergarten is available. An ad-hoc survey of National Authority for Child Protection made within the framework of documenting this Report, based on county structures reports, indicated that currently there are 3240 children with a disability in the age group 3-6 that are not attending school, out of which 364 have a mild handicap, 1598 have a medium handicap and 1278 have a severe handicap (ANPC, 2011). This represents three per cent of the total number of children in the 3-6 age group, but we consider that this number is under-estimated. In recent years, the trend of decreasing the number of children in special education schools and enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream education without sufficient support increased the risk of non-schooling or drop out (Horga et al, 2009).

1.2. Profiles of OOSC in Dimension 2

The data from UIS and INS sources points out that in 2009 more than 65000 **primary age children (between 7 and 10 years) were not attending school, accounting for 8% of the total number of children in this age cohort.** The categories of children highly affected are the boys (both in rural and urban areas), children from families with economic disadvantage (from poorest quintile), children of Roma minority and those with special education needs.

The percentage of children who dropout each year in primary education varies for the overall population during the reference period of the Report between 1.8% (in 2007/2008) and 1.4% (in the last 2 years of the period). As seen in the data included in Table below, the trend reported in the overall school population is a rising one in the first three years of the period and a decreasing one in the last years:

Table 2 Children of primary school age who dropped out (%) (2005/2009)

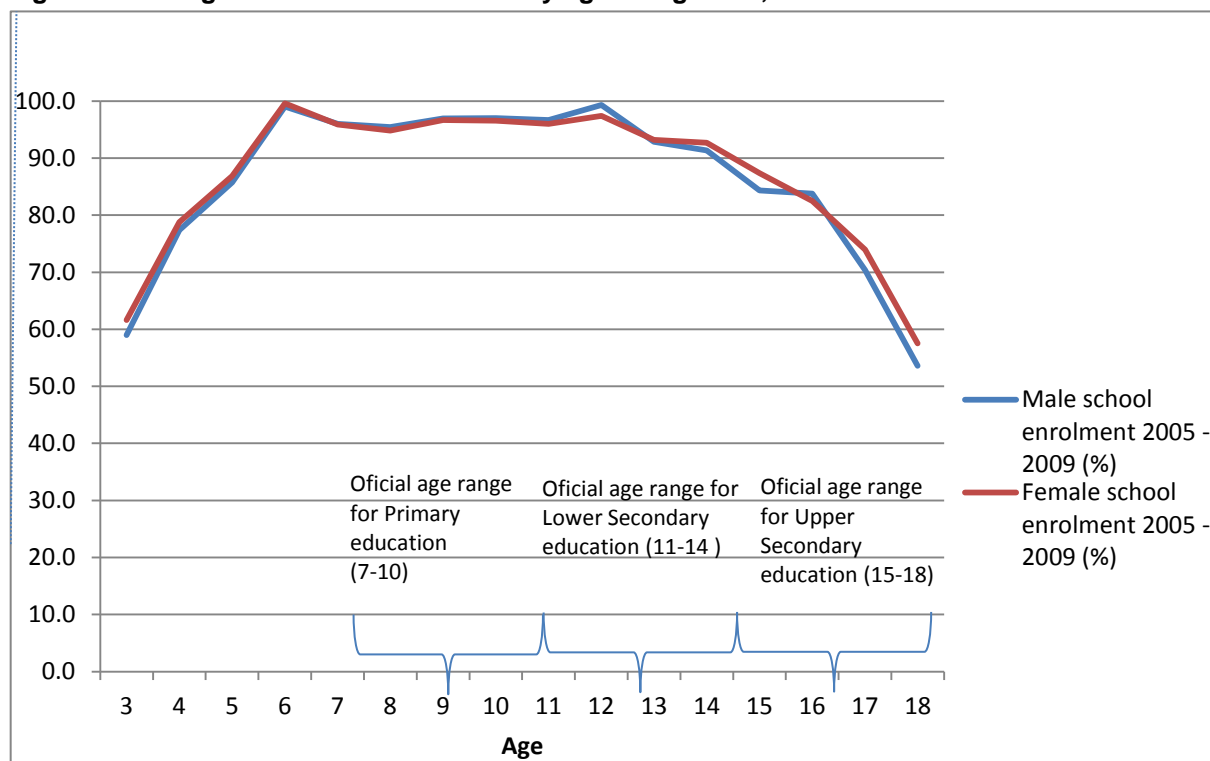
	Male	Female	Total
2005-2006	1.70	1.30	1.50
2006/2007	1.90	1.50	1.70
2007/2008	2.00	1.50	1.80
2008/2009	1.60	1.30	1.40
2009/2010	1.60	1.30	1.40

Source: INS

A constant gender gap may be noticed, in favour of girls: the value of the Primary dropout rate is 1.6 in case of boys and 1.3 in case of girls. The GPI reaches values between 0.75 and 0.81, with a decreasing trend in the last two years.

Nonetheless, the above-mentioned trends are related to the age falling within the official primary school age group. Thus, if in the case of 7-year-olds the reported drop in the percentage of children attending school is of only one percentage point (from nearly 97% to 96% in the last years), for the ages of 8 and 9 years the drop is of 4 percentage points: from 98% to 94%, and from nearly 99% to 95% respectively (Table 2, Annex).

Figure 5. Average school enrolment rate by age and gender, 2005-2009



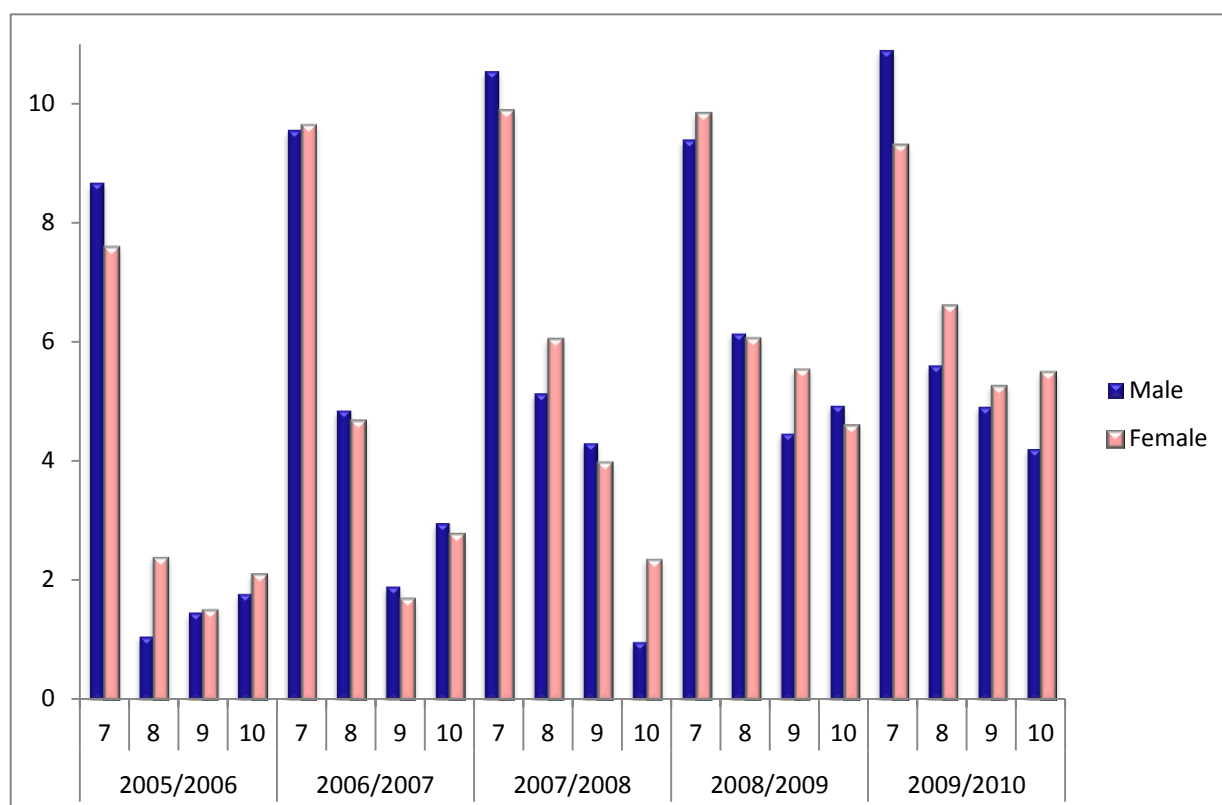
Source: INS

The data shows that **primary school boys are noticed to show a higher dropout record, while for the girls of the same age the risk is more related to not attending school at all.** Primary school age population taken as a whole reports a continuous increase in the share of out-of-school children, which practically doubles during the reference period: from 3.33% to 6.48%. The trend is similar for both population segments – male and female, however the percentage of dropouts is constantly higher in boys than in girls (GPI varies between 0.75 and 0.81), despite a gap-decreasing trend in the last two years.

The lack of gender disparities at primary school ages is also highlighted by the indicator **adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER), by gender**⁹. Thus, the GPI for this indicator is 1 in four of the five reference years; in 2007/2008, the GPI was 1.01 (Table 3, Annex).

As for the trend of indicator values, it is naturally similar to the one reported for the percentage of children attending school, namely a drop from nearly 97% as recorded in the 2005/2006 school year to 93.52% in 2009/2010 for the overall population, from 96.73% to 93.66% in boys and from 96.60% to 93.38% in girls.

Figure 6. **Average school non-enrolment rate by age and gender, 2005-2009**



Source: INS

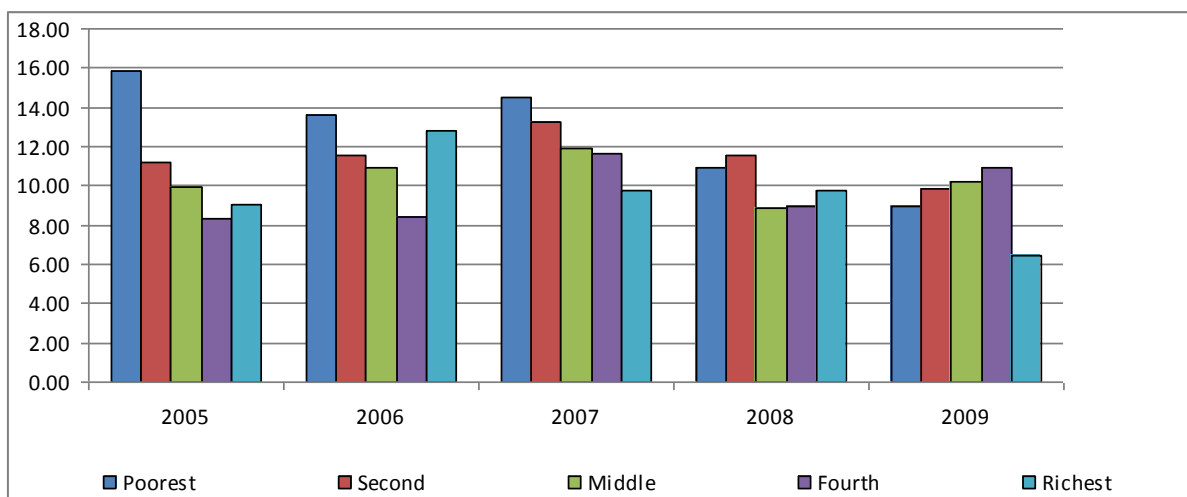
The percentage of primary school age out-of-school children, by age, reaches the highest level at the age of 7 years. Approximately 5-6% of these children are however enrolled in pre-primary education although they are older than the official primary school entrance age. As regards the trends in the indicator values for the overall population, they are highly ascending at almost all primary school ages. Hence, at the ages of 8, 9 and 10 years, the indicator value triples by the end of the analysed period

⁹ The age-specific enrolment rate captures the percentage of a given age population that attends school (at any level). The adjusted net enrolment rate captures the percentage of a certain school age population which attends the given level or a further level. For example, the primary net enrolment rate is the percentage of primary age children who are enrolled in primary or secondary. Children of this age in pre-primary are not counted as “enrolled”.

compared to the first year: from nearly 1.5-2% to 5-6%. At the age of 7, although some rise has also been noticed, it is of nearly 2 percentage points (Table 8, Annex).

The trends reported for the overall population are generally found in the male and female population segments. For boys, the rise at all ages is slightly stronger than for girls. Hence, in girls the percentage of primary school age out-of-school children goes up 2-3 times (from roughly 2% to almost 5-6%), while in boys it rises by 3-5 times (for example, 8-year-old boys show an increase in the Primary out-of-school rate from 1.06% to almost 6%). At the age of 7, the value of the indicator, both in girls and in boys, rises by 2 percentage points, the same as in the overall population. The difference is that while boys show a rise from nearly 9% to 11%, in girls the indicator variations are between 8% and 10%. Still, the analysis of the out-of-school rate values for the reference period underlines the fact that girls are more often disadvantaged than boys, as proven by the GPI.

Figure 7. Percentage of primary school-age children out of school, by wealth index quintile

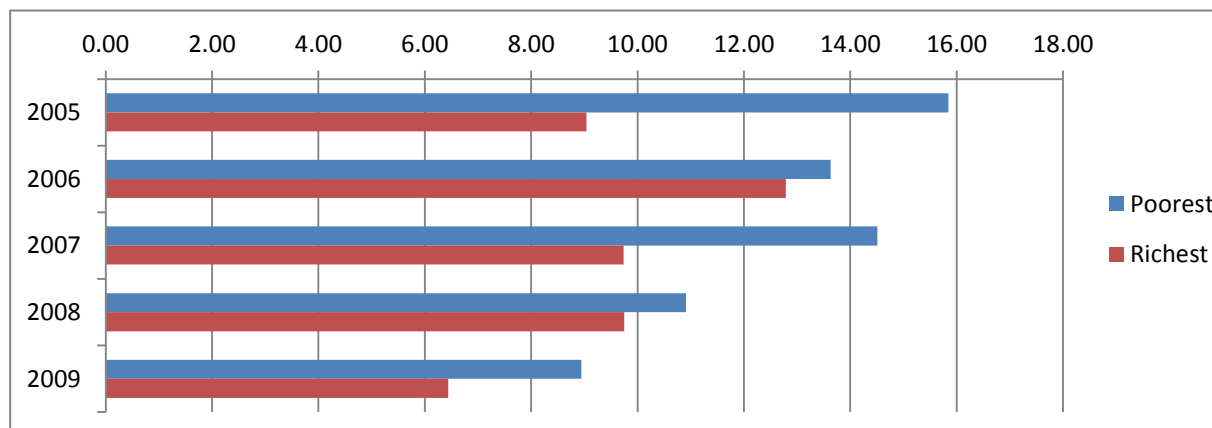


Source: HBS, National Institute of Statistics.

The percentage of out of school children is registering important variations by wealth index quintiles. According to the Household Budget Survey (HBS) data, the percentage is constantly reducing from the first quintile (poorest) to the last quintile (richest). This trend is observed for poorest/richest quintile for the total number of primary school age children (Fig, 7) especially in the case of the years 2005, 2007 and 2009, irrespective of gender or area of residence (urban/rural). However, for other quintiles, there is only a constant decrease in 2007, while in the case of other years this trend could not be observed.

In the reference period of the report, the differences between the lowest and the highest out of school children percentage are ranging between 2 and 8 percentage points, as indicated in the chart below. The HBS data should however be cross-checked as the variation is important from one year to another and no specific causes could be indicated for explaining it.

Figure 8. Percentage of primary school age children out of school, poorest and richest quintile



Source: HBS, National Institute of Statistics.

Important differences could be identified also in the case of school enrolment of primary age children between the majority population and Roma minority. As indicated by the research of RomaniCriss and UNICEF presented in the previous chapter of the report, out of 597 children aged at 7-11 years old from families with at least one child out of school, almost half of them (44,2%) are not attending any school program.

Another relevant research (Fleck and Rughiniş, 2008) highlights the disadvantaged situation of the Roma children schooling¹⁰. In comparison with non-Roma members of the same communities, the percentage of children with no school experience in the 7-13 years old group age is two time higher and in the 14-17 years group age is more than three times higher. Moreover, the percentage of Roma children not graduating lower secondary education (not completing basic education) is more than 10% higher than the one of the non-Roma children from the same communities surveyed.

Table 3 Highest educational attainment of out-of-school Roma children [2007](%)

	7-13 years old	14-17 years old
Never attended school	14.6	11.0
Primary education not completed	40.2	12.3
Primary education graduated(including special education)	19.7	12.1
Lower secondary education not completed	21.4	28.4

¹⁰The methodology of the study is based on a household survey including 2155 persons from communities with a Roma minority. The study included two samples: one Roma (1070 persons) and one comparative, non-Roma (954 persons) - p.16. There were 3% Roma persons in the non-Roma sample and 3% non-Roma in the Roma sample.

Lower secondary education completed (including special education)	4.0	25,2
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Source: Data calculated based on the Table 10-1 of the report *Vino mai aproape. Incluziunea și excluziunea în societatea românească de azi* [Come closer. Inclusion and exclusion in contemporary Romanian society], 2008, editors Gabor Fleck and Cosima Rughiniș, p. 165.

For comparison, as we have seen, in the case of children of Primary level age (7-10) the total percentage of out of school children is around 8% while in the case of children of lower secondary level age (11-14) the same indicator has a value of 5.4%.

Children with disabilities represent also an important category in the case of drop out phenomenon in the primary level. The National Agency for Child Protection data indicates that more than 2700 children with severe handicap aged of 7-10 years old are not attending school (see for details Table 25, Annex). In the case of children from the age group 3-14 years, a higher proportion of boys could be observed (5372 compared with 4084 girls), but further research of the situation of children with special education needs (SEN) is necessary, especially in the case of those included in the mainstream education, to understand better the current disparities based on gender, area of residence or type of disability.

Due to the lack of available data, it is not possible to explore the drop-out rate of primary or lower secondary age children with disabilities by gender, area of residence or wealth quintiles. However, as could be observed in the table below, according to ANPC administrative data, boys account for 57% of the total population of children with disabilities out of school (age 3 to 14). Moreover, children with disabilities from the rural area have a higher share in comparison with the urban area.

Table 4. Children with disabilities out of school, by type of handicap*, age group, gender and area of residence, 2011

	3-6 years old	7-10 years old	11-14 years old	girls	boys	urban	rural	total
Mild handicap	364	23	33	193	227	184	236	364
Medium handicap	1490	364	393	1009	1238	1166	1081	1490
Severe handicap	1211	479	521	926	1285	945	1266	1211
Very severe handicap	3805	2454	2369	3734	4894	3761	4867	3805
Total	6870	3320	3316	5862	7644	6056	7450	6870

*As defined in the Law 448/2006 related to the protection and the promotion of rights for disabled persons;

Data source: ANPC

1.3. Profiles of OOSC in Dimension 3

According to INS and UIS data, in 2009 there are almost 50,000 children of lower secondary age (11-14 years) out of school, accounting for more than 5% of the total number of children of this age. As indicated in the Table 4, in recent years the number of children of lower secondary age not attending school slightly decreased, while the number of children of primary age not in school increased by more than a half.

Table 5. Number and percentage of children out of school, by age group and gender

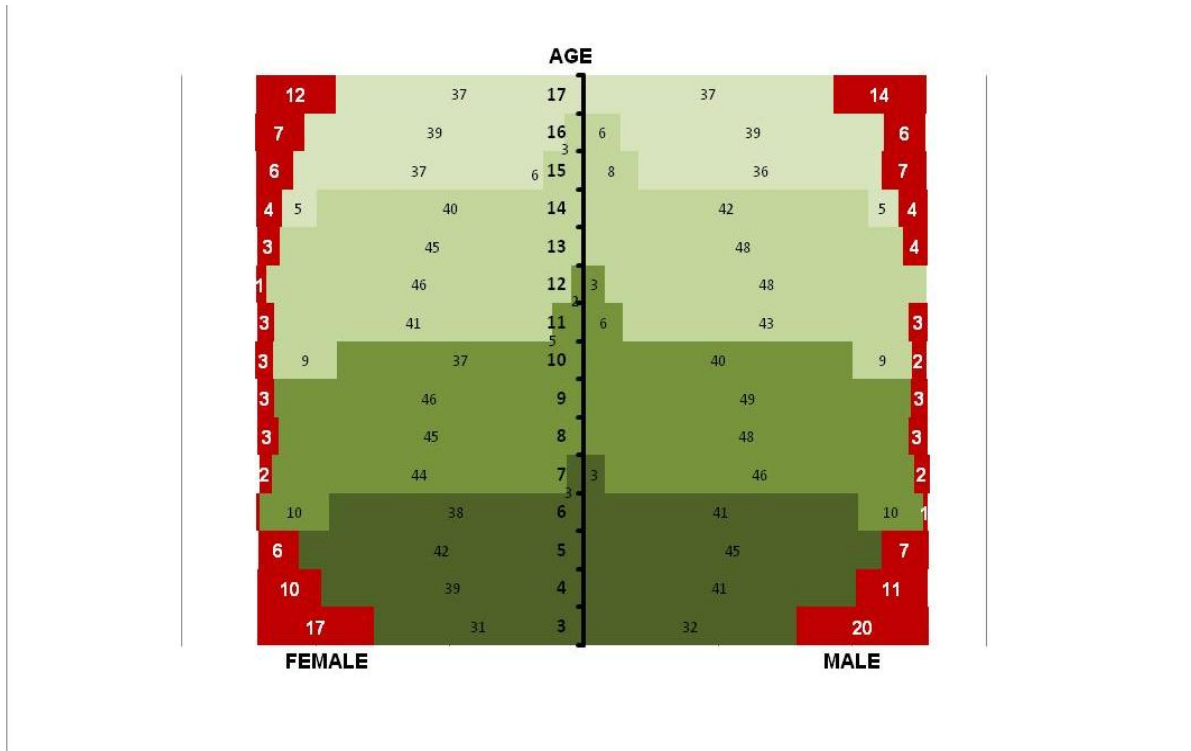
	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2005/2006						
Primary school age	14843	3.27	14666	3.40	29509	3.33
Lower secondary school age	19330	3.82	18554	3.85	37884	3.84
2006/2007						
Primary school age	19467	4.29	19062	4.41	38529	4.35
Lower secondary school age	23868	4.89	23999	5.15	47867	5.02
2007/2008						
Primary school age	23938	5.28	24101	5.59	48039	5.43
Lower secondary school age	25635	5.44	26086	5.81	51721	5.62
2008/2009						
Primary school age	28090	6.21	27829	6.47	55919	6.34
Lower secondary school age	25431	5.53	24972	5.70	50403	5.64
2009/2010						
Primary school age	28220	6.34	27885	6.62	56105	6.48
Lower secondary school age	23882	5.27	24306	5.64	48188	5.45

Source: INS

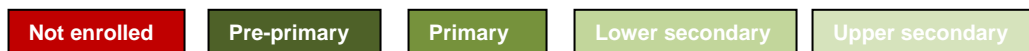
As in the case of passing from primary to lower secondary level, the end of the eighth grade represents a challenge for a category of students that are giving up their formal education. Even if the finalisation of the compulsory education is reached in the tenth grade (corresponding to a theoretical age of 16), more than 10% of the children are already out of the education system by the age of 14 – see Figure 9 below.

In the case of boys we notice an oscillatory descending trend at the age of 11 (94-98%), relatively constant trends at the ages of 12 (approximately 99%) and 13 (92-93%), and a decreasing trend at the age of 14 (from 94% to approximately 90-91%). The indicator values for girls and their trends are as follows: at 11 and 12, the percentage of children attending school shows an oscillating yet slightly on-the-rise trend, falling between 95-97% and between 97-99% respectively, while at 13 the trend is rather constant (92-93%), and at 14 there is a decreasing trend – from over 96% to 91-92%.

Fig. 9. School enrolment by age, level of education and gender (%), 2009/2010



Legend:



Calculated based on data from National Institute of Statistics, 2011.

With regard to gender-based differences in the percentage of children attending school, by age, at all ages and in all the years of the reference period they are generally below 1.5 percentage point (with some exceptions at certain ages and in certain years) and they are alternately in favour of girls and boys. Hence, the data make us conclude that gender inequalities are not constantly in favour of one population segment – male or female. The lack of gender disparities at lower secondary school ages is in fact also highlighted by the indicator **adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER), by gender**. Hence, the GPI for this indicator is 0.99 during the entire reference period of the Report (Table 3, ANNEX).

The trend recorded by the values of this indicator is slightly decreasing in 2006 compared to 2005 (by one percentage point), reaching a stable point at approximately 90%. The trend is identical in boys (from 91% to 90%) and in girls (from 92% to 91%).

The percentage of dropouts in the male lower secondary school population segment varies between 1.7% (in 2009/2010) and 2.5% (in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008). As noticed in the data included in Table 5, the trend recorded in the last three years is continuously decreasing, with a drop of 0.8 percentage points over this period. Moreover, it is noticed that the indicator level is higher than the one reported in primary school boys.

The percentage of lower secondary school age out-of-school children, by age, for the overall population, shows rising trends at two of the lower secondary school ages. Hence, at the age of 11, despite some variations, the lower secondary out-of-school rate goes up from nearly 3% to over 5%, and at the age of 14 years, where the highest share of out-of-school children is detected, the rise is from almost 5% to roughly 8-10%. The high percentage of children 14 years old out of school is explained also by the decrease of the school age from 7 to 6 years old. As a consequence, at 14 years a part of this population should already be in the upper secondary level. However, a significant proportion of the children of this age are finalising their studies only by graduating the lower secondary level and not making the transition to upper secondary. At the ages of 12 and 13 years, the trends are rising and falling, but unlike 12-year-olds, where the lowest share of out-of-school children is recorded (between 1 and over 2%), 13-year-olds show a much higher percentage - between 6% and 8% (Table 9, Annex).

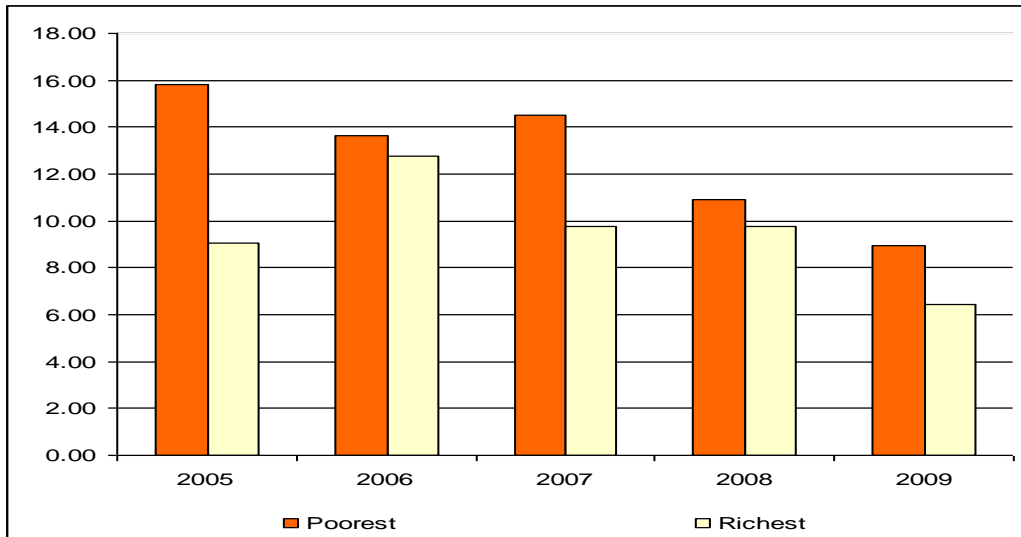
The trends recorded in male and female school populations are relatively similar. Lower secondary school age population taken as a whole reports a rise-and-fall trend in the share of out-of-school children, alternating between 9% and 10%. Both in boys and in girls, the indicator values rise after the first year of the period and become relatively stable in the following years. However, the rise is from nearly 9% to 10% in boys, and from 8% to 9% in girls. At the same time, we notice gender inequalities related to this indicator, with a GPI between 0.86-0.93.

As in the case of primary level, the percentage of out of school children of lower secondary age is registering important variations by wealth index quintiles. According to the Household Budget Survey (HBS) data, the percentage is constantly reducing from the first quintile (poorest) to the last quintile (richest) and this trend is observed in the total number of lower secondary age children out of school, and is maintained irrespective of gender, area of residence or region. In the reference period of the report, the differences between the lowest and the highest out of school children percentage are varying between 4 and 6 percentage points, 2005 having the largest gap (Fig. 10).

The data indicates that poverty has an important impact on children of primary and lower secondary school age, and it is expected that the effects of the prolonged economic crisis will increase the out-of-school rates and dropout rates of children with disadvantaged socio-economic background.

Major differences could be identified also in the case of school enrolment of secondary age children between the majority population and Roma minority. The research of Romani Criss and UNICEF indicates that out of 636 children of 12-16 years old, two thirds (64,62%) are in the situation of not attending school.

Figure 10. Percentage of lower secondary school age children out of school (poorest and richest), 2009



Source: HBS, National Institute of Statistics.

Main reasons indicated in the Romani Criss study related to school drop out for both primary and lower secondary Roma students are related to economic reasons, absent parents or negative attitude of family in relation with education, influence of peers or elder brothers, different disabilities or medical problems, and early marriage. The economic disadvantage of many Roma families is leading to, according to the study, child labour. Less than a third of parents with at least one child that dropped out (29,2%) declares that this child is not working *at all* while more than a half (56,4%) indicate that the child is working *occasionally or frequently* in the household and more than a fifth (22,7%) indicate that the child is working *occasionally or frequently* outside the family. Unfortunately in Romania the last survey on child labour was conducted almost 10 years ago and no recent data is available to compare this situation with the one from majority population.

Children with disabilities of lower secondary age represent another category of concern, having almost the same share in total as the ones of primary school age. According to the National Agency for Child Protection, the most affected are children with severe and very severe handicap (Table 25, Annex). However, as in the case of children dropping out from primary school, further research of the situation of children with SEN is necessary, especially in the case of those included in the mainstream education, to understand better the current disparities based on gender, area of residence, region/counties, type of disability and financial situation of the family.

1.4.Profiles of Children at Risk in Dimension 4

One indicator which highlights the potential risk of exclusion is the percentage of new entrants to primary education with no Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE) experience. In the overall population, the values of this indicator generally show a decreasing trend, reaching levels between 12.9% in 2005/2006 and 8.9% in 2009/2010 (Table 18, Annex). Based on the gender criterion, the highest rate of new entrants to primary education with no ECCE experience is noticed in boys both from urban and rural areas. GPI varies between 0.84 and 0.94 for the overall population, between 0.78 and 0.89 in urban areas, and between 0.91 and 0.95 in rural areas. Taking into account the area of residence, with the exception of the 2005/2006 school year, the indicator values showed constant differences to the advantage of rural areas for both male and female population segments. Data also underline the fact that in general, according to this indicator, the population most at risk are rural area boys, who in the last four years reported the highest percentage of new entrants to primary education with no ECCE experience.

Unlike the previous indicator, the 2005-2009 **repetition rate** for the overall population has generally followed a continuously rising curve. Hence, for 2nd grade the indicator rises from 2.3% to 2.7%, for 3rd grade from 1.2% to 1.8%, and for 4th grade from 1.5% to 1.8% - Table 6. One exception is the first grade where we observe a decrease from four to almost one per cent, situation influenced by the provisions related to the fact that repetition is not allowed in the first grade.

Table 6. Repetition rate at the primary and lower secondary level of education by grade and area of residence

Year	Residence	Grade							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2005/2006	Urban	2.3	1.5	0.8	1	2.8	2.3	2.8	1.9
	Rural	5.5	3	1.4	1.9	3.8	2.6	2.7	2.2
	Total	4.0	2.3	1.2	1.5	3.3	2.5	2.7	2.0
2006/2007	Urban	0.7	1.1	1.1	0.8	2.9	2.2	2.4	1.8
	Rural	1.1	2.1	1.8	1.5	3.8	2.3	2.4	1.9
	Total	0.9	1.6	1.5	1.2	3.3	2.2	2.4	1.8
2007/2008	Urban	0.5	1.7	1.1	1.3	2.6	2.4	2.8	1.8
	Rural	0.9	3.5	2.0	2.5	3.3	2.7	3.1	2.1
	Total	0.7	2.6	1.5	1.9	3.0	2.5	2.9	2.0
2008/2009	Urban	0.4	1.7	1.1	1.1	3.5	1.9	2.7	1.6
	Rural	1.0	3.4	2.2	2.2	4.8	2.3	2.9	1.9
	Total	0.7	2.6	1.7	1.7	4.1	2.1	2.8	1.8
2009/2010	Urban	0.5	1.7	1.2	1.1	3.1	2.4	2.2	1.5
	Rural	1.2	3.7	2.3	2.4	4.6	3.2	2.6	2.0
	Total	0.9	2.7	1.8	1.8	3.8	2.8	2.4	1.7

Source: INS

The above-mentioned trend, especially for 2nd-4th grades, is mainly influenced by the evolution of the indicator values in rural population, where repetition rate shows more significant rises (from 3% to 3.7% - 2nd grade, from 1.4% to 2.3% - 3rd grade, and from 1.9% to 2.4% - 4th grade), while in urban areas the same grades show a relatively constant trend (1.5%-1.7% - 2nd grade, 0.8%-1.1% - 3rd grade, and 1%-

1.1% 4th grade). In 1st grade, repetition rate drops substantially in the two population segments, just like in the case of the overall population, and in the last year of the reference period it gets to less than a quarter of the first year value.

Residential area differences are noticed not only in relation to repetition rate trends, but also to its actual values. Thus, in rural areas the indicator reaches double or almost the double value in all four primary school grades during the reference period.

Grade-to-grade comparisons show that the lowest repetition rate is generally reported in 1st grade (less than 1% for the entire period, except for 2005/2006, before the regulation not allowing the repetition in the first year to be passed and applied in the system). The highest rate is observed in 2nd grade (over 2.5%), due to the fact that often primary teachers only post-pone their decision to make a student repeat the year.

Looking at areas of residence, we notice the same grade-to-grade trend, with the main difference, as already mentioned, regarding the quantum of indicator values corresponding to areas of residence.

Unlike the repetition rate, the **primary education dropout rate by grade**, for the overall population, reports rise-and-fall values, with a rather decreasing general trend. The dropout rate values for the years marking the beginning and the end of the reference period are the following: 2nd grade – 1.4% and 1.2% respectively (1.7% and 1.6% in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 respectively); 3rd grade – 1.2% and 1.1%, (1.6% in 2006/2007 and in 2007/2008); 4th grade – 1.3% and 1.2% respectively (1.5% and 1.6% in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008). 1st grade indicator values are kept at 2.1-2.2% (Table 20, Annex).

The trends mentioned for the overall school population are also similar to those in urban and rural population segments. Taking the same criterion into account – the area of residence – we see that the advantage (which in most cases falls between 0.1-0.3 percentage points) for each of the four grades goes in some years to rural populations and in other years to urban areas.

The grade-to-grade comparison reveals that the highest dropout rate is reported in 1st grade – over 2%, while in the other grades the rate reaches +/-1.5%. The same trend is generally noticed in relation to areas of residence.

The survival rate¹¹ for the cohorts analysed between 2005 and 2010 is 92% - 94% (Table 21, Annex). The highest value of the indicator is reported at the beginning of the reference period (94.1% - in the 2005/2006 school year), and the lowest in the following year (92.5% - in 2006/2007). The difference between the highest and the lowest indicator values is 1.6 percentage points. After the 2006/2007 school year where the lowest survival rate was recorded for the cohort attending primary school in the period 2003 – 2007, there has been a slightly continuously rising trend until the end of the analysed period, without however reaching the value of the cohort that graduated from primary school in the 2005/2006 school year.

¹¹ The survival rate was calculated as the share of pupils enrolled in the first grade of primary level who reached the final grade of the lower secondary level in the total number of pupils enrolled in the first grade of primary level in a given period of time.

The survival rate is a relevant indicator for understanding better the categories of students at risk of dropping out. For example, the analysis of this indicator by gender shows non-significant differences (0.7 – 1.9 percentage points), constantly to the advantage of girls. The GPI highlights the lack of gender inequalities, with a value between 1.00-1.02.

The primary education dropout rate for the overall population is rising and falling, showing a decreasing trend in the last 2 school years, when it reaches 1.4% (from 1.8% in 2007/2008) - Table 22, Annex. Similar trends are noticed in urban populations, the lowest values, reported in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010, being of 1.3% and 1.5% respectively (compared to 2.1% in 2006/2007). In rural area, the trend is relatively constant, the most frequent rate being 1.4%. A cause of the fluctuation from year to year in the dropout rate by grade and for the overall population could be found in the differences in data reporting from schools due to inconsistent methodologies, as indicated in the introductory section. However a more in-depth analysis of this topic is necessary to assess the degree of influence on data accuracy.

Gender-based analysis also reflects an oscillating evolution of this indicator, with a decreasing trend in the last two years of the period (1.6%, from 2% in 2007/2008) in the case of boys, while in girls the rates are kept relatively constant: 1.3-1.5%. We also notice the constant advantage of the female population throughout the entire period, as proven by the GPI values of 0.75-0.81.

As concerns the indicator values by gender and area of residence, we generally notice that the highest ones go to urban boys (rates between 1.5% and 2.3%), followed by those related to urban girls (1.1%-1.8%). Nonetheless, this urban/rural disparity does not occur for every year during the reference period.

The GPI for the urban population, with values between 0.72 – 0.81, highlights the fact that urban boys are more at risk of dropping out than urban girls.

The transition rate from primary to lower secondary education is kept almost constant throughout the entire reference period (approximately 98%), with one exception in the 2007/2008 school year when the lowest indicator value was recorded, 97% (Table 24, Annex). Year-to-year variations fall below 1 percentage point.

Unfortunately the data available do not offer us the possibility of understanding better who are the 2% that fail to make the transition from primary to lower secondary, and also to identify specific risk factors in relation with the categories identified. The transition rate indicator reports non-significant gender differences. These differences are below one percentage point and are slightly in favour of boys. However, for the entire period of time, GPI highlights the lack of gender inequalities, as it falls between 0.99-1.00. No information on area of residence, financial situation of the family or other relevant factors is available for further risk analysis.

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The analysis of the indicators that help identify children at risk determined that the primary school age population segment most at risk with regard to school participation is the one comprising urban area boys. In their case, we find the highest share of new entrants to primary education with no Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE) experience, as taken from the data of the last 4 years, as well as the highest dropout rate for this educational stage.

The statistical analysis indicates rural children of both genders as another vulnerable category, besides the students with no ECCE experience. The differences from urban children show up not only in relation to repetition rate trends (relatively constant in urban areas and on the rise in rural areas), but also in relation to its actual values: in rural area, the indicator has a much higher value in all four primary school grades and throughout the entire reference period of the Report. As regards dropout, the GPI highlights also a significant gap between girls and boys in rural areas (with the second highest dropout risk), with values falling between 0.72 – 0.81.

Even if not directly indicated by the OOSC data, Roma children are among the most exposed categories of children to the risk of dropping out due to a complex of causes that will be further explored in the next chapter. Based on Household Budget Survey results, we have however an estimation of the out-of-school rates for Roma children, by household wealth, as indicated in the table below:

Table 7 Roma children enrollment by age groups and household wealth - 2009

	Total (number)		out-of-school (number)		out-of-school rates (%)	
	poorest	richest	poorest	richest	poorest	richest
7-10 years old	29976	1090	3883	0	12.9	0
11-14 years old	31060	1131	3921	0	12.6	0

Source: HBS, National Institute of Statistics.

Recent relevant research offers enough evidence that poverty, the low level of education of the parents, the difficulties of children to adapt to school culture and to speak and understand Romanian, the lack of pre-school education, the involvement in household labour and the insufficient adaptation of teachers to the needs of Roma students are some of the most important risk factors. In addition, for some Roma communities, specific traditions like early marriages are clearly opposing school attendance.

The same goes for children with disabilities, especially after the constant reduction of available places in special schools and the promotion of inclusive education policies promoting education of these children in mainstream schools. As indicated by several studies (Vrăjmaş 2010, Horga and Jigău 2009) the children with special education needs are still insufficiently supported and guided in meeting the objectives of the special curriculum mainly due to supply challenges (i.e. not enough support teachers, training programs and training materials etc). In this context, the risk of drop out is high, despite the constant efforts of many families to offer this support to their SEN child based on their own resources.

1.5. Profiles of Children at Risk in Dimension 5

As indicated in the report Methodology, a simple way to analyze the population of children at risk is to look at the at-risk children of yesterday who recently dropped out of school. Based on the findings of previous chapters, we already analysed the situation of children who leave school early from the point of view of age, level of education, gender, area of residence. This section will explore further these characteristics, taking into account also other relevant indicators such as survival and transition rates.

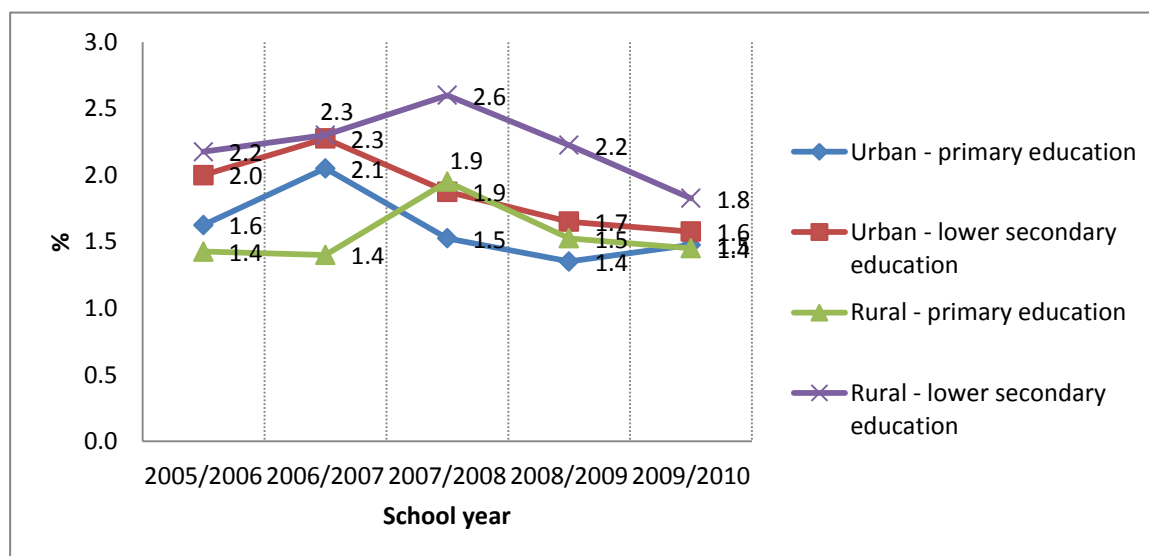
Repeaters are more likely to drop out and this is observable both in the case of primary and lower secondary education. The lack of performance indicated by poor school results leads to a decrease of motivation in its own capacity and a lower self-esteem. Often related also with a high absenteeism, the repetition of the year increases the pressure on the failing student, forced to re-adapt to new colleagues and often new teachers (especially in primary level).

The 2005-2009 **repetition rate** for the overall school population enrolled in lower secondary education shows a relatively constant trend in all the grades of the respective educational stage (except for 5th grade where a rising trend has been reported in the last years), with some differences as regards the actual indicator values. Hence, in 6th and 7th grades, repetition rate is less than 3%, in 8th grade less than 2%, while in 5th grade the indicator goes up from nearly 3% to 4% (Table 19, Annex). The indicator shows relatively different trends for urban and rural populations. Thus, for 5th and 6th grades, urban areas show a relatively constant trend (approximately 3% and 2% respectively), whilst in rural areas (especially in 5th grade) we notice a rising trend of roughly 1 percentage point. In the other two grades (7th and 8th), repetition rate drops slightly in urban area and stays rather constant in rural area (approximately 3% and 2% respectively).

Some residential area differences show up throughout the entire reference period of the Report not only in relation to repetition rate trends, but also to its actual values. These differences, to the disadvantage of rural school population, are over one percentage point in the 5th grade and less than 1 percentage point in the other lower secondary education grades.

Grade-to-grade comparisons show that in general the highest repetition rate is reported in 5th grade due to the difficult adjustment to secondary education (between 3% and 4%, for the entire reference period of the Report), and the lowest rate in the 8th grade (2 and less than 2%); in 6th and 7th grades the indicator values are below 3%. With regard to areas of residence, we notice the same grade-to-grade trend, with the difference that for all the grades and for the entire reference period the indicator values corresponding to rural area are higher than those related to urban area.

Figure 11. Dropout rate at the primary and lower secondary level, by type of residence, 2005-2009



The **dropout rate** for the overall population reports decreasing trends in 6th, 7th and 8th grades (from nearly 2% to less than 1.5%) and a rise-and-fall trend in 5th grade (between 2.5% and 2.8%) - Table 20, Annex.

The trends mentioned for the overall school population are also similar to those in urban and rural population segments. Taking the same criterion into account – the area of residence – we see that the advantage (which falls between 0.2-0.9 percentage points) goes in most cases to urban areas.

The grade-to-grade comparison reveals that the highest dropout rate is reported in 5th grade (2.5% - 2.8%), while in the other grades the rate reaches +/-2%. The same trend is generally noticed in relation to areas of residence.

In lower secondary education, **the survival rate** for the studied cohorts reaches 88%-89%. The highest value is reported in the cohort that graduated in the 2005/2006 school year (89.2%), and the lowest in the cohort finishing 8th grade in 2008/2009 (87.6%); the difference between the highest and the lowest values is 1.6 percentage points. The general trend identified during the reference period is a decreasing one with a slight rise in the last year of the period.

The survival rate reports significant gender differences to the advantage of girls. In the analysed period, the difference between the male and female survival rate falls between 2.7 and 3.7 percentage points, with a decreasing trend in the last year. For the first 4 years of the analysed period, the GPI was 1.04, illustrating the above-mentioned differences, while dropping to 1.03 in the 2009/2010 school year.

Lower secondary education dropout rate for the overall population shows a decreasing trend – from 2.3% in 2006/2007 to 1.7% at the end of the analysed period (Table 23, Annex). The trend is also similar in urban population, with a drop from 2.3% to 1.6%. In rural areas, although we can talk about a reduction in the dropout rate, this becomes visible only in the last year of the reference period, when it reaches 1.8% from 2.6% - the greatest value recorded in 2007/2008. The differences between urban and rural school populations (between 0.2 and 0.7 percentage points) show up every year during the analysis in favour of urban children, except for 2006/2007 when urban and rural rates are identical (2.3%).

The **gender-based** analysis reflects a decreasing trend in the last two/three years of the period in the case of boys and girls (from 2.5% to 1.8% in boys and from 2.1% to 1.5% in girls). We also notice the constant advantage of the female population throughout the entire period, as proven by GPI values between 0.78-0.90.

Comparing indicator values based on gender and area of residence reveals the fact that these are similar or even identical during three school years in the case of boys from the two areas – urban and rural. Nonetheless, as far as the female school population is concerned, we notice the constant disadvantage of those living in rural areas, with a gap of 0.3 – 0.9 percentage points.

The GPI of the dropout rate from lower secondary education for the rural population, with values between 0.86 – 0.91 (except for 2009/2010 school year when it was 1), highlights the fact that rural boys are most at risk of dropping out.

Lower to upper secondary education transition rate¹² varies during the reference period between 90% and 94%, with the highest values reported by the end of the period. In relation to this transition rate, gender differences are non-significant. These differences are below 2 percentage points, tending to drop in the last years, and being in favour of girls. Between 2005 and 2009, GPI varied between 1.00 and 1.02, illustrating the lack of gender inequalities.

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The analysis of the indicators targeting children at risk spotted out the fact that the lower secondary student category mostly at risk with regard to school participation is the one comprising rural children. This is proven both by the repetition rate indicator and by the grade-based dropout rate while in the case of primary students only repetition rate is representing a high risk for the rural population. Thus, in the case of the repetition rate, the differences from urban population (more reduced than in the case of primary school) exceed 1 percentage point in 5th grade and are below 1 percentage point in the other lower secondary education grades. Moreover, the grade-based dropout rate shows differences between 0.2-0.9 percentage points, being in most cases to the disadvantage of the rural population.

The grade-based dropout rate places rural areas in the same disadvantaged position, as the difference between urban and rural areas in all the years analysed falls between 0.2 – 0.7 percentage points. A higher dropout risk is however recorded, unlike in primary school, in the case of boys from rural areas. The GPI highlights a significant gap between boys and girls in rural areas (with the second highest dropout risk), with values between 0.86 – 0.91.

The lower secondary education survival rate (which for the overall school population by gender and throughout the entire reference period is lower than primary education values) also demonstrates the higher risk for boys with regard to school participation. The gender-based differences between indicator values fall between 2.7 and 3.7 percentage points, with a declining trend in the last year and a GPI of 1.04 for the examined period.

According to RomaniCriss and UNICEF Study (Surdu, 2011), the higher risk in relation to Roma children not attending school is also represented by the repetition rate, both for primary and lower secondary level. For a sample of 417 students from these levels, the average repetition rate was of 1.7%. Also the same study considers failing results and repetition as an important risk factor for drop out, given the fact that almost half of the students investigated who dropped out (47,6%) were at least once in the situation of repeating one class, while 38% were twice in this situation and 12% three times.

¹² Transition rate to upper secondary is defined as the difference between the number of new entrants in the first grade of upper secondary education and the number of pupils who were enrolled in the final grade of lower secondary education in the previous school year, divided by the number of pupils enrolled in the final grade of lower secondary education in the previous school year, multiplied by 100.

Chapter II. BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS IN RELATION TO THE 5DE

This chapter explores the barriers and the dynamics as well as the causal processes of exclusion, based on the profiles identified in Chapter I and the data on children targeted by our research: out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out. The main aim of this section is therefore to offer details on the main causes of exclusion and main barriers to access, linked with the profiles of the children in one of the five dimensions of the OOSC methodology. Also, the chapter will point out the importance of different causes, highlighting the relative weight/impact of one type of barrier in relation to others, laying thus the foundation for the last chapter of the report.

Both demand side and supply side are researched, while the main aspects considered are socio-cultural factors and economic ones (demand side) and socio-cultural, educational, policy, governance, administrative and financing factors (supply side). Specific issues related to the analysed educational factors include among others: written and taught curriculum, teaching materials, teacher selection and in-service training, and parent involvement in school activities.

The analysis focuses mainly on four main groups of out-of-school children: Roma minority, children from rural areas, children from the poorest quintile and children with disabilities. In specific cases, the causes of exclusion for more detailed profiles are discussed, such as: children with migrant parents, working children, girls entering early marriage, etc. As the disaggregated data presented in Chapter I have not been enough for this more detailed analysis, additional sources of information have been used to support the specific findings of this chapter.

2.1. Socio-Cultural Demand Side

Out-of-school children are often the consequence of a multifactor impact: social, cultural, economic, and educational. Children's school participation is the result of converging actions taken by the school, their family, representative community-based institutions, and public authorities. If any of these bodies do not work to optimal capacity, the risk of non-attendance increases and so do the related social and economic implications. For example, this is good illustration of the capability theory: a community lacking positive social and cultural capacities has a negative impact on individuals' development in terms of social integration, cultural development at different levels and restricting access to social services, including education.

Frequently enough, in Romania the causes to non-attendance are chiefly thought to be related to poverty and precarious socioeconomic conditions typical to most-at-risk groups: children of Roma ethnicity, children from rural areas, children from economically challenged settings, children with special educational needs. Nonetheless, an increasing number of recent studies highlight the fact that ever so often social and cultural determinants have lasting large-scale effects on school participation (Dobrică&Jderu, 2005). Thus, for each at-risk group and for the profiles identified in the previous chapter, there is a series of specific socio-cultural drawbacks which we will further look at in detail.

- ***Roma Children and Adolescents***

Romania has the largest Roma population of all European countries. The official data available are those collected for the 2002 official census, when only 535,140 people (accounting for 2.47% of the entire population) declared to be Roma. Still, according to the Romanian *Research Institute for the Quality of Life*, the number of self-identified and hetero-identified Roma is 1.5 million (in other words 6.7% of the entire population). This is the most frequently used estimate and considered to be the closest to reality (2010, OSF, *No Information, No Progress*) even if other local or international organizations (such as Amnesty International) talk about approximately 2 million Roma or nearly 10% of the population. Roma have a relatively uniform coverage across the Romanian territory and according to official statistics the counties with the highest shares of self-declared Roma people are Mureş (7.0%), Călăraşi (5.6%), and Bihor (5.0%).

School participation of children belonging to the Roma minority group was analysed in a lot of research and studies and improving this matter became the overall goal of various intervention projects involving decision-making authorities or mobilising Roma or non-Roma NGO's.

The educational disadvantage is indicated by the very high percentage of functionally illiterate Roma (over a quarter of the entire Roma population according to RomaniCriss estimates), and by the great number of unschooled children and youth or early school leavers. Therefore, current estimates reveal that more than 80% of children who have never attended school are Roma and that at least 18% of Roma children have not completed the compulsory education level (Ionescu and Matache, 2011). Moreover, recent research (Surdu 2011) shows that only 81% of Roma children attend primary school and just 61% go to lower secondary schools. Moreover, in the case of adolescents, the disadvantaged situation is also important with only 33% of the Roma aged 15-18 years are still in school, compared to almost 79% of the other youngsters.

Relevant studies have identified a set of socio-cultural drawbacks for this group as presented hereinafter:

- The low education attainment of Roma families is often considered a key factor for Roma children's poor educational participation. Research on international assessments (TIMSS, PISA) designates a direct link between learner attainment and their families' level of education. Some research (Jigău, 2002) has highlighted the fact that most dropouts (over 50%) come from unschooled or primary-schooled families. Thus, Roma children's belonging to socially and educationally disadvantaged families often acts as a barrier for their academic attainment – firstly because low-educated parents cannot offer the educational support needed for their child's school preparation, and secondly this may be the effect of children's negative role models in terms of school attendance and worth for their social and professional rise.
- Some Roma communities have preserved **cultural customs** related to early marriages. Such practices (like "stealing girls") have actually become less common but they continue to work as a "living legend" in the collective mindset and they have a direct impact on school participation, especially on girls'. These kinds of traditions make Roma parents either sign their girls up for school late or pull them out of school after a few years or never send them to school in the first place. On the same note, Roma boys' school continuation after finishing compulsory education seems to be a problem because this goes against the custom of them starting working and gaining economic and

financial independence as early in their adolescence (Dobrică&Jderu, 2005). The point of these practices is basically the preservation of traditions and hence of ethnic identity.

- **Gender gaps within the Roma community** are more noticeable in the case of girls after they finish primary education (4th grade) and up to the end of lower secondary education (8th grade), while in boys after finishing compulsory schooling (10th grade – Duminică&Ivasiuc, 2010).
- The early marriage tradition acts as a **poverty-proliferating** mechanism from one generation to another. An illustrative example is that of young girls who become pregnant (Bennett, 2010). They have smaller chances of benefiting from parenting care or support for their child-raising, child care and education, which makes it difficult for them to complete basic education, to get an appropriate qualification and enter the job market.
- The group of children and youth whose parents respected the early marriage tradition should be analysed more thoroughly as they have not yet been made the subject of specific analyses. These children are more exposed to the risk of low birth weight or premature birth and they are less likely to be breastfed thus risking poorer physical and mental health than other children (Horga & Jigău 2009). Besides medical and health problems, this group receives less family support and it is hence more exposed to **academic failure**.
- **The mobility of Roma nomadic communities** – migrating from one place to another according to season, economic conditions, social dynamics inside the community – is a significant cause of early school leaving. This phenomenon has become even more common in recent years against the backdrop of Roma parents' migration abroad accompanied by their children. Dropping out or coming back home/to school during the academic year is frequent in these communities and this reality increases drop-out risks as the education system shows little flexibility for a child's comeback/re-enrolment during the academic year (Fartuşnic, 2011). Difficulties are pointed out regarding recognition of studies completed abroad when children have attended a form of schooling and regarding specific catch-up lessons that need to be planned.
- Another barrier to Roma children's access to education consists in their **lack of identity documents** (birth certificate, identity card). This matter has significantly improved in the last decade as a result of governmental support programmes – for example, the development of a *methodology addressing lack of marriage, identity and housing documents*, as part of a PHARE programme (Fleck, 2006) – or of specific projects developed by NGO's. Nevertheless, in some communities Roma children still do not have identity documents. The causes of this are diverse: lack of interest, lack of knowledge regarding the steps to getting the documents, lack of financial resources for such a proceeding, lack of local public services advising on such matters, etc. The absence of identity papers hinders most of all access to education and health care.
- **The language spoken in the family** is frequently a barrier in terms of access to education and of school success. Different relevant studies (Jigău, 2002) have highlighted the link between school participation and the language spoken in the family. Thus, research studies conducted at the beginning of the 2000's showed that participation in pre-primary education was twice as low in

Romani-speaking families as in (hetero- or self-identified) Roma families which did not make use of this language. In the case of school age children (7-16 years), the share of children currently not attending school is 2 ½ times more frequent in Romani-speaking families than in the families which do not speak this language while school age children not enrolled is almost three times higher in self-identified Roma families. As a result of policies that have promoted the Romani language in the curriculum (through Romani language lessons and teachers), these figures have improved in the last decade, but lack of Romanian language knowledge continues to be an obstacle and a drop-out risk factor at least at school debut (Fartuşnic, 2011; Surdu, 2011).

- Another barrier, transcending both demand and supply side, concerns **discrimination**. Geographically, we can often talk about residential segregation: compact Roma communities are frequently located at the outskirts of communities, struggling with improper infrastructure, poverty and being far from schools. For example, in 2009, a mayor of a locality from the County of Braşov built a wall to physically separate the Roma community from the Romanian and Hungarian communities (Stoian, 2010). These sorts of actions lead to Roma's self-marginalization from other communities and to a refusal of cultural exchange: "We come from the uphill neighbourhood, the gipsy neighbourhood. We are different from those in the downhill neighbourhood. They are richer." (Interview with Roma parents, Constanţa, 2010).
- A 2009 Gallup survey commanded by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights shows that of all the groups represented in the Member States, the Roma ethnic group is the most exposed to discrimination. Although Romania has the lowest level of discrimination towards the Roma, the perception of the majority over this minority group continues to be based on stereotypes like criminality, violence, lack of interest for school or work. According to the survey, one in three respondents finds that most Roma break the law and one in three that Roma are more violent than the members of other ethnic groups. Other surveys (INSOMAR, 2009) reveal that 40% of respondents think that mixed marriages between Roma and non-Roma are bad or very bad and 25% believe that Roma children shouldn't be playing with children of other ethnicities.
- At the level of pre-primary education, almost one third of Roma children learn in Roma-majority classes, and 11.7% of them in Roma classes. Most of the time, segregation comes from non-Roma parents' refusal to enrol their child in classes attended by Roma children. This phenomenon is also noticed in relation to the preferred educational establishment as some schools have eventually turned into schools that traditionally teach Roma children. Recent studies (Surdu, 2011; Bennet, 2010) indicate that in the schools with high shares of Roma children – that are actually segregated schools – the quality of education is much poorer than the average level of Romanian schools: repetition and functional illiteracy are significantly higher. Segregated schools have under-qualified staff and worse infrastructure, issues that will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.

- **Children and Adolescents from Rural Areas**

Taking into account residential area-based disparities identified in the previous chapter as well as the fact that important policies have been promoted to reduce rural students' gaps in terms of school

access, participation and attainment compared to children in urban areas, this analytical dimension is of special importance to our research. The Final Longitudinal Study (UMPFE, 2009) presents an overview of wide-ranging barriers facing children and youth in rural areas as regards school participation, where socio-cultural factors play a major role:

- **The socioeconomic development** of rural communities is often a factor that holds back school participation: underdeveloped infrastructure; relatively great distance from children's home to school (a problem when we consider the merger of several rural small-sized schools); precarious school infrastructure and material equipment; qualified teachers' relatively low interest to commute and teach in more remote rural communities (UMPFE, 2009; Jigău, 2002).
- In a context where rural communities are struggling with a still underdeveloped economic environment and professional insertion/job-finding opportunities are quasi-inexistent for rural youth in their communities, the **motivation for school participation** is usually low. The rural population's poor level of schooling, especially in terms of post-secondary/tertiary education, also leads to **more reduced educational aspirations** that adults pass on to the younger generation. Still, the tradition of leaving school after 8th grade has become less frequent even in rural areas mostly due to examples in the community of children who continue their studies after finishing this educational stage. Moreover, qualitative analyses on school leavers have indicated (Voicu, 2010) that they relate to school as to a lost good, recognising its importance and describing it as a setting where they would like to return.
- Given that the rural population generally works in farming, students' involvement in such activities increases the risk of early school leaving. Most of the time, they accrue absences and struggle with school demands. Therefore, students and their families may have lower trust in education especially when drop-out is imminent.
- **Inefficient or inexistent collaboration** between local agencies responsible for child census (local authorities, schools, medical centres) is yet another major barrier. There are times when these agencies do not run a census or the data are not passed from one institution to another (although all of them need to know and monitor the children's entire social, academic and medical track). Due to lack of clear records about the children of a community and insufficient monitoring, they are left out of efficient educational, social, professional inclusion measures and strategies.

- **Children and Adolescents from Poorest Quintile**

The group of children from poor families, identified in Chapter I to this report as children from families in the 5th wealth quintile, is partially overlapping the first two groups that have been previously analysed (Roma children, rural children) as regards socio-cultural exclusion barriers. Besides the drawbacks already mentioned, in the case of children from poor families we also notice the following:

- As far as poor communities are concerned, we can talk about a lack of efficient strategies that **motivate** children to take part in education and their parents to enrol them and support them while

in school – given that education is not regarded in the family as playing a decisive role for an individual's social and professional achievement. Studies on drop-out (Voicu, 2010; Surdu, 2011) notice that families dealing with particular economic challenges are often **unaware of the importance of education and lack confidence in the utility of attending school**. Particularly in the case of pre-primary and primary school children, at an age where parental influence is crucial, this view has a high potential negative impact on school attendance and performance.

- Lack of **conditions for the family to support education** primarily concerns the financial resources needed to provide minimum child schooling conditions (clothes, footwear, school supplies) as well as small contributions to various extra-curricular activities (such as field trips). In addition, needy families struggle to provide children with minimum home study conditions (space, electricity, proper temperature, etc.). All these factors are an impediment to school access and participation – under the conditions of compulsory school enrolment and compulsory homework completion specific to the Romanian education system.
- The impact of other types of resources than financial or physical on non-schooling or the school drop-out phenomenon should be further explored. Resources such as demographical, symbolical, relational are fundamental for the social hierarchy and for accumulation of experiences and positive models that can be generalised in everyday life (Vasile, 2010).

- **Children with disabilities/special educational needs**

For children with **special educational needs**, socio-cultural setbacks refer to a series of specific aspects:

- A first barrier applicable for both supply and demand side in the case of children with SEN is more generic: insufficient development of an **inclusive culture** – both in and out of school. In Romania, the integration of children with SEN into mainstream schools has been an educational policy measure implemented too suddenly, without the adequate preparation of the education system as regards (human, material, financial) resources, raising awareness of the importance of inclusion and developing a correlated school ethos.
- **Discriminatory attitudes** towards children with SEN are mainly socially manifested, often going along with parental shame. Social labelling of children sometimes makes their parents not settle their child's academic record straight (in the sense of getting an SEN certificate entitling them to different types of school support, like a support teacher): "Some parents don't want their own child to be assessed because they are ashamed of what the neighbours might say ... he is handicapped; so they don't do it although the child has a problem"; "Some parents have simply refused their children's assessment, they can't accept this label, that their son or daughter is this way and so the child has to suffer. We even have children who are eligible for inclusive schooling but some parents don't want this." (Interview with a teacher, apud. Jigău&Horga, 2009, p.64).
- All these school attitudes towards children with SEN are often a risk factor. While the right to education of all children is generally promoted, when confronted with the actual situation of

including these children into mainstream education, school stakeholders are somewhat reluctant: some teachers think that these children do not have real chances to academic attainment; some parents are against including children with SEN in their child's class and look at this as downgrading the quality of education delivered to their "normal" children or as a factor preventing their children's development (Jigău&Horga, 2009).

2.2. Economic Demand Side

In Romania, GDP per capita is around 40 percent of the EU average. Moreover, Romania has one of the highest inequality of income distribution in EU (after Letonia Latviaand Portugal), with a Gini index estimated to 34.9% in 2009 by National Institute of Statistics and 31% by other international studies (MONEE and EUSILC).

EUROSTAT 2010 and EUROCHILD 2010 data reveal that poverty today is a major problem for a significant part of the country's population. Thus, almost a quarter of the population is at risk of poverty, with a net income below 60% of the national equivalent average net income (after social transfers). At the same time, 33% of children aged 0-17 years are at risk of poverty as they grow up in households earning an income that is below 60% of the national average household income.

The consequences of poverty and extreme poverty on school participation and drop-out are evidenced by numerous national surveys (Voicu, 2010; Jigău, 2002). Thus, even if compulsory education is free, indirect school costs are very often named as one of the most important barriers to school participation. Children and adolescents from poorest quintiles and Roma children and adolescents are thus the categories that are mostly exposed to the risk of dropping out in pre-primary and primary education, as well as in upper educational stages.

Major difficulties that children from needy families are often faced with concern insufficient food that they get at home, lack of adequate medical care when they are sick and parents' neglect/lack of emotional support. All these barriers have direct effects on these children's capacity to attend school and on their academic attainment.

A study carried out by the Institute for Education Sciences (ISE, 2005) shows that the total amount that families spend on students' specific school expenditures is 419.37 EUR per annum, which is more than the poorest Romanian families can afford. Most of the items would be impossible to buy if they were not free (textbooks, stationary and transportation). The amount of the social scholarship for students is established by local authorities and paid from their budget – with a national average of around 200 RON (46.2 EUR) per annum. The information available about the poorest families indicates that only a small amount is regularly spent on educational materials as other priorities come first.

A more recent study explores the hidden costs of the pre-university school system (GrădinarușiManole, 2010). The surveyed parents were asked to estimate the total cost that the family had to cover throughout a school year for their children's schooling (at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels). Taking into account different expenditure categories – textbooks, special exercise books and notebooks, educational software, school supplies, the uniform and sports outfit, school pool fund, class pool fund, contribution to school security, tutoring, lunchbox, transport, various school

events – as well as other categories, the median total cost (per annum) per child is 1,490 RON (around 370 EUR).

As to the breakdown of average costs by expenditure category, the research has found that the biggest amounts that parents pay (id., p. 23) are usually for tutoring (1,348 RON – 330 EUR), school transport (721 RON – 175 EUR) and food (634 RON – 155 EUR). As concerns the costs that are directly associated with education, school supplies and textbooks, exercise books, special notebooks and educational software account for 467 RON (114 EUR). The uniform and sports outfit add 255 RON (62 EUR) to the final count and over 440 RON (107 EUR) go to: class and school pool funds, school shows and events, school security and repairs or new furniture (for these, money is collected separately from class/school pool funds), gifts and flowers (for teachers and colleagues on special occasions, such as March 1st and 8th), school contests, extra-curricular activities carried out in school, Internet use or magazine purchase. Some parents also mention boarding costs.

Data analysis points to disparities between rural and urban communities: urban children pay a (private) tutoring price which is almost three times higher (it should be said that this phenomenon is not mandatory and it is mostly encountered at upper secondary education level); rural children's travel expenses are more than 1 ½ higher than those of urban children's; the annual amount needed to support a child while in school is greater in urban areas – 1,572 RON (380 EUR) than in rural communities – 1,372 RON (330 EUR).

The analysis on the use of the money paid by students' families to school pool fund (28% of respondents to the questionnaire declared that the payment was mandatory) and to class pool fund (over 43% of the parents participating in the survey declared that it was a mandatory contribution) tracks down the following main allocations: school repairs/renovation and classroom refurbishment/maintenance, school lab/classroom equipment and purchasing teaching materials, stationary and office supplies.

Many teachers say that they constantly provide material support (mainly clothes and school supplies) to economically challenged children, support that is sometimes rounded off by other classmates. Moreover, the principals of the schools counting a great number of children from needy families declare that these shortcomings are addressed through contributions of local or international NGO's and donations from religious/congregational organizations (Fartuşnic, 2011).

At the same time, distance to school is an important barrier because the families of these children live at the outskirts of localities or even outside of them. A greater distance to school leads to a greater risk of non-attendance in the absence of proper school transport provided by the local community, while parents say that their children's non-attendance is due to lack of proper clothes or footwear and to bad weather conditions (Surdu, 2011).

We will next look at a few barriers related to the economic causes of exclusion regarding the group which is most affected by the phenomenon of not being enrolled at all in education system and by drop-out, namely Roma children.

Half of the Roma population and around 60% of Roma communities in Romania live in extreme poverty (Sandu, 2005). At the same time, 74% of Roma communities struggle with serious income shortages, 67% of them have severe accessibility problems and 23% of them have to deal with very bad electricity and/or drinking water shortcomings. With only one in eight active citizens having graduated from

secondary school, Roma population has a major qualification deficit, translated into lower employability and low and unstable income. This is why estimations show that Roma's GDP per capita is roughly one third of the national average (around \$1,500 – measured by a purchasing power parity method for Romania as a whole).

A recent World Bank study estimates that Roma employment figures are 26% lower than the average male employment rate (World Bank, 2010) . The poor level of education also reflects in the income earned by Roma employees (55% less than the majority) while the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 makes things even worse.

UNDP/ILO data indicate that in Romania more than 40 % of the children from Roma households **experience severe malnutrition close to starvation** (Gabor and Rughinis, 2008). Even if this percentage should be further documented, it is clear that Roma community is trapped in a very severe poverty gap, similar to the populations living in the most impoverished regions of the world. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that the latest Romanian survey on drop-out, conducted by Romani CRISS and UNICEF in 2010, points out that drop-out is primarily caused by lack of financial resources. This is mostly mentioned as a cause by Roma parents who pull their children out of kindergarten or agree to drop-out, with a frequency of nearly half of the answers (44.7%), higher up than other reasons named such as poor quality of education delivered (34%), emigration (12.8%), child's immaturity or health (8.5%).

Moreover, poverty effects build up circulatory migration and child work inside the household (including looking after younger siblings) or outside of it. Moreover, economic problems lead to large families where child benefits become one of the main income sources. Early school leaving-focused research points towards family disorganization as an important risk factor often arising from high poverty (Voicu, 2010) although relevant systematic data are not available.

A series of socioeconomic shortcomings are still persistent in **rural areas** too, often acting as a risk factor for school attendance in the case of rural children and adolescents. The most important is **involvement in lucrative activities** for the family, which is the reality of poor rural communities. Early on, children are considered labour force by their family and their schooling is perceived as labour loss or as a reduction in the family's benefits. Child and adolescent involvement in lucrative activities and their taking over adult roles inside the household (house cleaning, cooking, taking care of livestock, looking after younger siblings) seems to have become a stronger phenomenon in recent years against the backdrop of rural population's massive economic migration abroad, at least in some rural communities (Toth, 2008). Such cases lead to high truancy, insufficient preparation for school and finally to drop-out. Unfortunately, there are no recent national surveys offering a systematic analysis of child work phenomenon and its effects on drop-out.

Another under-analysed factor, encountered both in urban and rural areas, is the migration phenomenon and how one or both parents' migration abroad impacts school participation. Not earlier than 2005, Romania started to talk about the situation of underage children left home alone. 2008 research reports indicate that over 350,000 children aged 0-18 years (representing around 7% of all children in that age group) had at least one parent abroad, while one third of them had both parents abroad (Toth 2008). The survey conducted by the NGO Alternative Association from Iași with the support of UNICEF Romania offers an overview of the emotional and social problems facing these children, especially when they are separated from their parents for longer periods of time. The main

positive aspect mentioned by children in this situation is their improved material status, whereas related difficulties concern lack of proper care from the adult they have been left with (most often a grandparent or other close relatives), new responsibilities after having to take on the role of their migrant parents, lack of information and participation in family decision making or communication issues. The survey shows the major drop-out risk to which these children are exposed, with a focus on secondary school children (over 13-14 years).

2.3. Supply Side Barriers

The most significant barriers regarding the educational and social service supply for children and adolescents who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out focus on three main areas:

- Supply side economic ;
- Shortcomings related to educational supply, the quality of school infrastructure and outfitting;
- Barriers related to the adequacy and training of human resources employed in the education system.

In recent years, a pre-primary school network has been developed, which has translated into a growing number of children who attend this educational stage. In big towns (with more than 150,000 inhabitants) but ever more so in rural areas, the supply of public kindergartens does not manage to fully meet demand although new buildings were built during the reference period of the report. Moreover, the number of children in a kindergarten group can exceed the legal upper limit and some groups work simultaneously with over 30 children, with a clear negative impact on individualisation and personalisation of learning and support.

By comparison, primary or lower secondary schools supply sufficient places and the number of students rarely goes beyond the acceptable limits set forth in school regulations. The area of residence continues to be a major differentiating factor for this indicator. The biggest discrepancies are noticed in **pre-primary education** (19 children/teacher in rural areas compared to 16 children/teacher in urban settings) and in **primary education** where the ratio is reversed in favour of rural schools (19 students/teacher in urban areas compared to 15 students/teacher in rural area). **Lower secondary education** reports the lowest student/teacher ratio of the entire education system, especially in rural areas where the average ratio is of only 10 students to one teacher. However, the values of this indicator are expected to change after the recent measures of school network rationalisation through the closedown/merger of educational establishments and without the right transportation services, the rural children and adolescents will be exposed to increased absenteeism and the risk of drop out. At present, according to MECTS data, there is a shortage of nearly 700 school buses, almost 90% of them being needed in rural areas. Where transport is not provided, economically challenged families say that they can't cover that cost and thus refuse to send their child to school (Fartuşnic, 2011). In addition, distance to school and in particular the bad state of most roads in remote rural communities are a cause of irregular school attendance, especially in winter.

Another major issue that kindergartens and schools have to deal with, mostly in rural areas, are operating conditions. As seen in Table 2.3.1., one in three rural schools fails to meet the requirements set by sanitary authorities. Primary schools, usually serving a small number of students in inadequate

facilities, are most affected – namely 40% of them. The majority of primary schools are located in rural communities (over 95%), which comes to confirm the urban/rural divide.

Table 8. Schools receiving sanitary authorisation*

	YES	In progress	NO
URBAN			
Total	78.67	6.71	14.62
Kindergarten	76.88	7.26	15.86
Primary school	52.67	8.23	39.09
Primary and secondary school	86.96	5.35	7.69
RURAL			
Total	54.41	14.27	31.32
Kindergarten	52.20	14.12	33.68
Primary school	47.14	14.19	38.67
Primary and secondary school	64.67	14.57	20.76

*Issued by County Sanitary Authority

Source: *The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2011*

One of the reasons why schools are not granted the permit is their connection to water mains. Whilst only 5.5% of urban schools are not currently connected, in rural areas one third of all educational establishments are in this situation (Table 2.3.2.). Once again primary schools are in the most difficult position as almost half of them are not connected to running water mains or their system is currently out of use. By comparison, only 1.97% of primary and lower secondary schools from urban areas do not have access to this utility.

Table 9. Schools with running water

	Access to running water		
	Yes	In progress	No/ Out of use
URBAN			
Total	93.83	0.79	5.53
Kindergarten	94.50	0.46	4.89
Primary school	66.12	2.45	31.43
Primary and secondary school	97.65	1.14	1.97
RURAL			
Total	62.14	4.07	33.79
Kindergarten	58.70	4.48	36.82
Primary school	52.77	3.95	43.36
Primary and secondary school	76.07	3.54	20.35

Source: *The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2011*

We notice that things are similar when it comes to access to electricity, primary and lower secondary schools from rural areas being entirely or in the process of getting connected to electricity mains. But

there are 62 rural schools that are still not connected to electricity, accounting for nearly 0.42% of all schools in rural areas.

Table 10. Access to electricity

	Access to electricity		
	YES	In progress	NO
URBAN			
Total	99.78	0.10	0.14
Kindergarten	99.77	0.08	0.15
Primary school	99.18	0.00	0.82
Primary and secondary school	99.85	0.15	0.00
RURAL			
Total	99.48	0.10	0.42
Kindergarten	99.41	0.13	0.46
Primary school	99.38	0.10	0.51
Primary and secondary school	99.70	0.05	0.26

Source: The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2011

Like for other utilities, school sanitation depends on how developed the area is (Table 2.3.4.). Infrastructure projects are under way in many rural communities, but there are significant lacks related to sewerage or gas access in these locations. Thus, one in five rural schools have to cope with totally improper sanitation, which makes it difficult to ensure personal hygiene and brings about major health risks.

Table 11.Types of sanitation

	Types of sanitation		
	Sewerage	Septic tank	Other
URBAN			
Total	79.91	15.50	4.59
Kindergarten	82.65	13.01	4.35
Primary school	23.67	52.65	23.67
Primary and secondary school	84.98	13.51	1.52
RURAL			
Total	8.81	72.08	19.11
Kindergarten	8.18	71.25	20.57
Primary school	6.01	69.20	24.79
Primary and secondary school	12.35	76.02	11.63

Source: The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2011

While rural local authorities having to cover the running costs are short of resources, many schools still do not have modern heating (Table 2.3.5.). Moreover, only 60% of urban schools and 14% of rural schools are connected to gas mains. The negative impact of these conditions on quality learning environment is directly observed during seasons with extreme low temperatures, when often heating

problems occur, especially during the first classes. However, the lack of decent living conditions home minimizes in most of the cases the risk of missing school due to insufficient developed school infrastructure, students at risk often being better off in school than home.

Table 12. Central heating

	Central heating		
	YES	In progress	NO
URBAN			
Total	66.66	0.75	32.59
Kindergarten	66.20	0.65	33.16
Primary school	42.98	1.65	55.37
Primary and secondary school	72.06	0.78	27.16
RURAL			
Total	43.39	1.67	55.18
Kindergarten	37.88	1.56	60.56
Primary school	30.22	1.01	68.77
Primary and secondary school	63.63	2.43	33.95

Source: *The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2011*

As to the schools catering for children with SEN, the survey *The Situation of Children with Special Educational Needs Included in Mainstream Education* (coord. Jigău, M. & Horga, I., 2009) outlines the main issues related to the material, financial and human resources of these establishments:

- The schools for children with motor or sensory impairments are poorly equipped and building adjustments giving access to people with physical disabilities are hard to create (many times, there is an access ramp in place, but there are no adjustments for access to upper floors, to restrooms, etc.) especially without a special measure in this area;
- Generally, counselling and speech therapy labs (that itinerant teachers may also use) are rare (in some counties this has improved in recent years); there is also a lack of offices outfitted for therapeutic recovery (physical therapy, play therapy, occupational therapies, etc.);
- Insufficient teaching materials available for children with SEN, almost inexistent in some cases;
- Insufficient facilities (children with SEN are schooled in the same facilities available before making the decision to integrate them into mainstream education) and spaces for support teachers' individual activities with students with learning difficulties;
- Specialized staff shortage (medical staff, psychological recovery staff, etc.);
- Highly insufficient financial allocations, let alone reduced (insufficient) funds granted to experts for field travel (support/itinerant teachers, members of the Internal Commission for Continuous Evaluation, etc.).

As concerns the outfitting of the schools where **Roma students** learn, recent data (Dumincă, G., Ivasiuc, A., 2010) reveal a series of problems such as:

- Specialised labs: 26% of researched schools do not have specialized labs for subject matters like biology, chemistry, physics or computer science; moreover, according to the data regarding the schools that have such labs, these facilities are used daily up to 77%, the rest of them being used weekly, monthly or never; it has been noticed that the availability of specialised labs in schools is disproportionate to the share of Roma children: the higher the percentage of Roma students, the less likely for the school to have specialised labs;
- Libraries: 18% of schools do not have a library, and in nearly 10% of those that do have one, students do not have access to books – this is typically encountered in the schools where the library is actually located inside the schools with legal personality (coordinating schools) and not in the subordinate structures/establishments that may be located at a great distance from the coordinating school; we spot the same tendency of a school being less likely to have a library as the share of Roma students in the total student population increases;
- Number of books in library: the schools with a high share of Roma tend to report a smaller number of books per student than the schools with less Roma students;
- Gyms/athletic fields: the schools with high shares of Roma are less likely to have a gym or an athletic field than those with low shares of Roma students.

Other supply side factors could be identified :

- Ethnic discrimination is often mentioned to be present in the school environment as well. Relevant studies (Dumincă&Ivasiuc, 2010; Surdu, 2011, Voicu 2010) have identified a greater number of problem schools in Roma communities: unqualified and unsteady teachers; precarious material resources (facilities, equipment, teaching materials); discriminatory school climate (teachers' discriminatory attitudes towards Roma students).
- **Negative school ethos** and **ethnic segregation** overlapping **academic attainment**-based segregation (many badly performing children are Roma) often act as major school risk factors: *“I have a girl who finished 5th grade last year; she went to school for a while and then she wouldn't go anymore. She felt bad for not being like the others. She didn't know [things]. Her colleagues would help her do her homework.”* (Interview with Roma parent, apud Ulrich, 2009: p.29). In this context, there is also a negative perception of the community over the education system, *“including discrimination, school violence, lack of vacancies at the school of choice or lack of a school teaching the trades of choice, school schedule, as well as the child's inability to speak the teaching language.”* (Surdu, 2011: p. 7).

While the main causes of schools with Roma students being works off are not systematically researched, it seems that unequal distribution of resources is clearly linked with the funding mechanisms (based on historical costs), making the risk higher in schools where there is already a long tradition of under-financing. Moreover, the voice Roma parents seems to have lower chance to effectively put a pressure on decision-makers and correct these inequalities compared with other parents associations.

At the same time, although several initiatives have been taken in this department, the education and training system continues to lack flexibility for covering the **shortage/low level of education of at-risk groups, especially of the Roma population**. *Second Chance* programmes are the only way to complete a minimum level of learning but such programmes do not enjoy a homogeneous geographical coverage and do not live up to the current demand; in addition, this type of programmes is insufficiently known in certain communities, leading to a vicious circle where lack of demand hampers supply growth: these schools cannot operate without a minimum number of students enrolled.

Unfortunately, in the absence of integrated intervention strategies, the practice of **developing flexible educational programmes** that encourage the preservation of traditions and hence of ethnic identity is underdeveloped. For example, local and school decision makers still resist accepting classes only for Roma girls or accepting one parent's presence during lessons, despite the fact that *the risk of having the girls kidnapped while at school* is one of the reasons indicated by family why keeping the girls home. More flexible organisation procedures can address this issue, just as the case of students that engage in seasonal work (farming, animal husbandry), with school timing/schedule better adapted to attendance patterns. Except for medical cases, any form of home schooling is not officially approved.

Specific supply challenges are faced also by children and adolescents from rural areas. As far as human resources are concerned, we notice once again the concentration of experienced and qualified teachers in urban, high-performing schools to the detriment of those located in rural or peri-urban areas. Due to national training programmes, at present the share of qualified teachers in **pre-primary education** continues on the same rising trend as previous years, going up to 95.4%. Nonetheless, pre-primary education still shows the highest share of unqualified teaching staff, mostly in rural areas.

According to INS data (2010), the shares of qualified teachers have increased in **primary and lower secondary education levels**, reaching 98.5% in primary schools and 97.1% in lower secondary schools. Still, initial training and continuing training programmes seem to have failed to develop the skills required for individual work with children at risk. For example, despite the adequate provision of school instruction books, there is a lack of teaching/learning materials adapted to the needs of children with few opportunities and most at risk of dropping out. Moreover, the teachers have limited skills in developing their own teaching materials and making the necessary curriculum adaptation to the needs of this group of students (Voicu, 2010; Fartuşnic, 2011).

The current curriculum is perceived by all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents) to be overloaded with low-relevance information for adult life and employment and hardly linked to the specific context of a particular school/environment. Information still takes precedence over problem-solving skills development, and it is clearly not valued by many parents or students (Duminică and Ivasiuc, 2010).

Other important challenges, especially for rural schools refer to the high share of commuting teachers, of those without tenure (high staff turnover) and of few specialized training opportunities aiming at the development of teaching strategies adapted to the needs of students at risk. Moreover, the 2011 teacher certification examination brought to light the existing lacks in the current selection and training system for future teachers as more than 70% of applicants failed the exam.

Hence, promoting inadequate learning methods escalates academic failure risks for students at risk, while skills shortage is also confirmed by the very high number of students who believe that poor communication with teachers and the fact that the latter are not open to their problems are the main causes of violent behaviours in schools (Jigău, 2004).

Insufficient teacher training is something that comes out of recent national and international assessments as well. Therefore, the scores at the national 8th grade assessment for the 2009-2010 school year indicate a Romanian Language and Literature promotion rate of 83.3% whereas for Math it goes down to 76.4%. There are significant residential area-based differences, with a promotion rate in rural communities that is around 8 percentage points lower than in urban areas for Romanian Language and nearly 5 percentage points lower for mathematics. PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS international assessments confirm the fact that Romania performs worse than other states in the region, and once again rural students' scores are significantly lower than urban children's (for example, the average score for reading is 436 in the case of urban students and 392 for rural students). An overview of the scores reached at the last PISA test in Romania (2006) is presented in Table 2.3.6. At the same time, reading score differences due to family disadvantaged background (poverty) are illustrated in Table 2.3.7.

Table 13. Average PISA Scores

Average score Reading	Average score Math	Average score Science	% pupils scoring below level 1 Reading	% pupils scoring below level 2 Reading	% pupils scoring below level 1 Math	% pupils scoring below level 2 Math	% pupils scoring below level 2 Science
424	427	428	below L1b: 4.1%; at L1b:12.7%; at L1a:23.6%	at.L2:31.6 %	below L1:19.5%; at L1: 27.5%	at L2:28.6%	at L2:34.1%

Data source: OECD - PISA 2009 Results, volumes I and II. 2010.

Table 14. Summary of students' and schools' socio-economic background and performance

Mean performance score in Reading	Percentage of students below proficiency Level 2 in Reading	Average PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) Mean index	Interquartile range of the distribution of the student ESCS	Score point difference associated with one unit increase in the ESCS	Gini index	Percentage of explained variance in student variance
424	40,40%	-0,34	1,12	36	0,31	13,60%

Data source: OECD - PISA 2009 Results, volumes I and II. 2010.

Recent studies (Voicu, 2010) have shown that drop-out is directly influenced by the inclusive culture of the class and school. Teacher training programmes are still missing in the area of support and proper management of relationships between children at risk of dropping out (including children who got married at a young age) or who return to school after dropping out and other school stakeholders. At

the same time, drop-out risk detection skills are underdeveloped. Without proper detection, mediation, facilitation and communication, school stakeholders' prejudices and stereotypes affect the self-confidence and motivation for learning of the children from every exclusion dimension.

In the case of children and adolescents with SEN, another supply challenge is related to the insufficient preparation of the school for being an inclusive school – in terms of needed material, human and teaching resources – is the main risk factor for children with SEN. Hence, without really knowing their developmental potential, such children are often regarded as bad students, learning support is lacking, and the “likelihood” of academic failure is prevailing. These issues will be discussed again in the section dedicated to educational supply, especially as regards provision of support staff for students with SEN attending mainstream education (Jigău&Horga, 2009).

2.4. Policy, Governance, Capacity, Financing

Both at the level of the education system and at the level of social policies in general, there is a strong commitment to inclusion and school participation of groups at risk is one of the clearly stated governmental priorities. Unfortunately, the strategy development process was slow and strategy implementation and monitoring were not done on a systematic basis. For example, the measures set for monitoring truancy and drop-out, especially among students at risk, have not been sufficiently coordinated and systematically applied across the entire education system.

Therefore, a general and unitary definition of drop-out and never attending school is still missing, and a coherent data collection methodology is just being developed for local, regional and national information, training and communication structures and mechanisms in key areas: desegregation/discrimination, prevention and fight against school violence phenomena, inclusion, etc.

In addition, at the level of quality assurance policies, “Educational Risk Mapping” is expected to be put into practice to highlight the added value of a school's educational services directly linked to the environment where it works, and specific quality standards are expected to be piloted and applied for each level and type of school.

The Report on the State of Education (MECTS, 2010) indicates that efficient decentralisation and decisions as close to beneficiaries as possible must be seconded by coherent regulations and process control, which requires improved management control standards. Therefore, school management teams need assistance to apply the measures required to continue the decentralisation of the pre-university education system, mainly as regards:

- The application of funding and reporting mechanisms and procedures in a decentralized education system;
- Restructuring institutional management to take on and fulfil new roles and functions;
- Implementing the system of standard costing compatible with quality standards and students' specific educational needs, required to manage and coordinate schools in a decentralized setting;
- Providing transparency and public accountability.

Upper secondary school network is insufficiently developed in rural communities, especially those that have a well-defined vocational profile and that could offer the chance of getting a professional qualification. Limited access to such schools (due to distance, required financial resources, time) drops the motivation for school participation in lower educational levels too. At the level of the entire education system, the share of those who choose a vocational path in technical high schools without continuing their studies in tertiary education is relatively low, which means that there is a risk of a strong social polarization between those who graduate from university and those who have a low level of qualification (Voicu, 2010). Rural education is even more exposed to this risk as participation in post-compulsory education is much more reduced here than in urban settings.

Financing

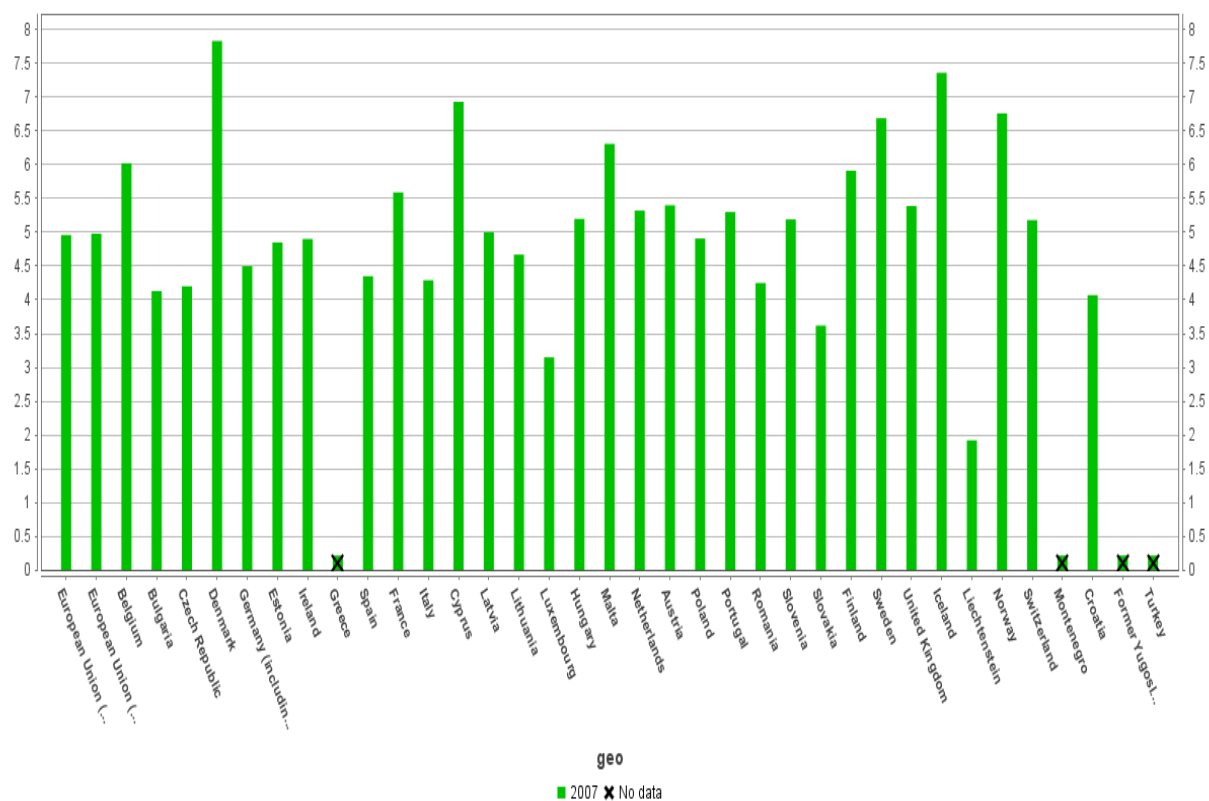
At present, the new regulating framework aims at mainstreaming a system of financial allocation per capita that could make educational budget allocation more equitable. The new Education Act introduces the principle of “funding per student” whereby public fund allocation becomes transparent and is done in accordance with strategic educational targets. It is expected that annual standard costing per student should boost inter-school competition and school performance. At the same time, the new planned mechanism will facilitate the monitoring of resource allocation and expected results as well as corrections where local budget allocations are not met¹³.

Financial expenditures related to salaries, benefits, indemnities and other pay rights, as established by law, as well as related contributions, for pre-university public educational establishments, will be done based on standard costing per student/pre-primary child, in line with Government Decision 1618/2009 on financing pre-university public educational establishments funded from local budgets. In order to increase the efficiency of the education system and the quality of teaching, standard costing per student/pre-primary child is to be introduced for utilities as well, leading to a higher transparency on costs and actual expenditures. OOSC are the first group to take advantage of the new financing system as it is expected that school managers will be directly interested in keeping all the children in school and secure the planned school budget for a specific year.

Unfortunately, only a few indicators on funding by level of education are currently available and only for 2007 (EUROSTAT, 2011). Consequently, it is impossible to run a pertinent analysis on the degree of equity in educational budgeting and budget execution, identifying funding gaps and specific strategies to assist vulnerable groups. After a long period of being under-financed, starting with 2007 the educational budget exceeded 4% (see the chart below). The set target is 6% of GDP, but there are no data proving that it has been actually reached.

¹³ The new mechanism is planned to be introduced at the level of education system starting with school year 2012/2013.

Public expenditure on education
Percent of GDP



2.5. Analytical summary

Regardless of which group out-of-school children belong to, our analysis points to a series of **general bottlenecks acting as barriers or causes of drop-out**:

- Underdevelopment of efficient, sustained and concurrent strategies to include in the education system all children irrespective of their individual, family, socioeconomic, cultural challenges;
- Failure to apply a nationwide unitary methodology to record and monitor school age children and out-of-school children;
- Lack of implementing rules for the laws on compulsory school participation and insufficient knowledge over the socioeconomic background of the most vulnerable groups;
- Poor development of alternative educational services/educational tracks for children at risk of staying out-of-school and failure to represent vulnerable groups (and hence the right to education); insufficient bodies meant to protect and uphold the respect for the right to education of all children (such as a “juvenile court”/”children’s advocate”);
- Insufficient parent involvement in school life through specific information, training, assistance, counselling programmes addressing children most at risk of dropping out in particular; lack of system-level mechanisms meant to valorise/capitalise on positive experiences acquired through relevant projects promoted in partnership with schools and non-governmental organizations.

At the same time, this chapter has captured a series of barriers specific to certain at-risk groups. Thus, with regard to Roma children and youth, a number of factors having a strong impact on their school participation have been highlighted:

- Both single-parent families and two-parent families often find themselves in a challenging socioeconomic position; to cover their shortcomings, the children of these families are used for work, for looking after their younger siblings or for taking care of the household;
- Often, lack of local employment opportunities makes education useless (or almost) as long as school participation and academic attainment do not translate into employment and earning opportunities;
- Their under-representation in student and parent advisory boards and even the opposite trend: the higher the share of Roma students, the less likely it is for that school to even have a student board (Duminičă and Ivasiuc, 2010).

Moreover, if school representatives discourse states that discrimination does not exist in schools, practice-wise the phenomenon is highly felt by two of our identified categories of children and adolescents at risk: Roma and SEN. Teachers describe Roma children as more indolent, lazier, filthier, and less intelligent than other students; moreover, teachers blame Roma students exclusively for their academic failure. The same goes for SEN students often labelled as violent, disturbing the classroom, with no potential for learning.

With regard to gender distribution, the analysis has shown that one of the most important reasons why girls drop out after primary school, especially in the case of Roma and rural girls from primary and lower secondary is their involvement in household work and/or looking after their younger siblings and early marriage. Boys leave school in upper classes to work abroad with other adults; the discussions with parents of low and very low socioeconomic level revealed that education, at least higher education, had no point to them and lacked perspectives; more than that, if girls attended this level of education, they would go beyond marriageable age, while boys would put off the time when they become financially autonomous and independent.

Chapter III. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES RELATED TO THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF EXCLUSION

This chapter offers a detailed analysis of the most important policies and strategies targeting out-of-school child issues as promoted at governmental level and by civil society players, capitalising on the main findings of the preceding two chapters. Thus, we aim at identifying more efficient and better targeted interventions for the future, starting from the profiles and causes of exclusion pointed out so far.

This chapter has been designed based on the recent changes to the educational legal framework and on the main areas of analysis proposed in the OOSC methodology: evidence on results and good practice related to demand side (socio-cultural and economic policies and strategies), supply side (educational and cross-sectoral interventions), management and governance, and budgeting/financial policies and strategies. The second part of the chapter outlines the social protection system, exploring key social protection programmes, evidenced and perceived impacts of these programs on OOSC, a cross-sectoral approach and funding mechanisms for social protection systems.

3.1. Supply side – a new policy framework

The new National Education Act has operationalized the basic options set forth in the National Pact for Education, signed in the spring of 2009 by every parliamentary party and representatives of trade unions, student/pupil/parent organizations, and of other non-governmental organizations delivering educational programmes. Thus, the aim has been to develop a regulatory legal framework as realistic and as stimulating as possible, backed up by secondary legislation and later developments better adjusted to educational pathway changes.

As far as pre-university education is concerned, the new act has aimed at matching the levels of education to the demands of modern schooling and to the European Qualifications Framework, at new curricular policies and appraisal procedures, at speeding up decentralisation in the context of quality assurance and reforming HR policies. The most important points of novelty brought in by the new legal framework relative to the children and youth from the groups at risk analysed in this report are the following: explicit consideration of parents as school partners; special attention to early childhood education and making preparatory year compulsory; development of lower secondary education; professionalizing the teaching career and reconsidering teacher's role and place in the education system; promotion of the educational portfolio. In this section, we will run a brief analysis of these issues from the perspective of low-opportunity groups as identified in Chapter 1 to this research report.

Parents as School Partners

At the time of enrolment of ante-preschool, preschool or school children, educational establishments and parents enter **an educational contract** stipulating the parties' mutual obligations. The responsibility for the child's education no longer goes entirely to teachers, but also to the parent or legal

guardian who must take measures to make sure the child attends school during compulsory school years.

Moreover, parents play a significant role in specific programmes promoted in pre-university education. Hence, the “School After School” programme, delivering educational, leisure, spare time activities to consolidate acquired knowledge or to speed up learning, as well as remedial learning lessons, will be scaled up across the system through a partnership between MECTS and parent associations. At the same time, the Parent Committee shall work with the educational establishment in order to decide on optional and voluntary disciplines (part of the curriculum as decided by school). Parents are constantly informed on how their children are doing at school through the *Student’s Educational Portfolio* communicated at the end of 2nd and 6th grades (after being previously assessed).

At decision-making level too, the role of parents and of their associative structures becomes increasingly important. According to the new arrangement, the school board of each educational establishment – the main decision maker at school level – is made up of parent representatives alongside teachers elected by the school’s teaching staff, and local community representatives. Faculty council meetings are attended by other representatives of the Parent Committee, without any right to vote. Moreover, the new legislation prescribes that each year the Council shall present to the Parent Committee a report on the quality of education – a provision that ensures accountability of school decision-making.

Promotion of Early Childhood Education

The new act reforms early childhood education, covering the period of 0-6 years, with its two components: ante-preschool education (0-3 years) and pre-primary education (3-6 years). This lays the foundation for a unitary approach to education at young ages, highlighting the crucial importance of this stage for the child’s full development later on. For the first time in a legal document of such importance, the transition has been made from a “childcare-based” approach to an “educational” approach to children under 3. Therefore, **ante-preschool** educational establishments shall be organised in accordance with the quality standards approved by Government Decision and initiated by the Ministry of Education, which requires education stakeholders and health and childcare service representatives to share similar views. The accreditation methodology for ante-preschool education service providers is also drawn up in partnership by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports and by the Ministry of Health.

From now on, pre-primary education shall stretch over three years and the current policy aims at its gradual mainstreaming. Thus, the number of children aged 3-6 years who are not in kindergarten is expected to drop significantly, especially in first- and second-year groups, due to integrated support measures targeting vulnerable child groups.

At the same time, the law stipulates that public funds may be allocated to accredited early childhood education service providers, regardless if they are public or private. Thus, the principle of “child-based funding” applies at this level also, aiming at boosting competition between different ante-preschool education service providers and scaling up children’s access to quality educational and childcare services.

Introducing Preparatory Year

A **preparatory year** will be introduced in order to offer children a gradual transition, in an integrated and organised setting, from pre-primary education (for those who have attended it) or from an exclusive home life (for those who have not attended pre-primary schooling) to school life. On the one hand, the prep year will build up the preparation of those who have been part of pre-primary education, and on the other hand it will allow those who have never been enrolled in kindergarten to socialize, to become accustomed to life in a group and acquire the skills needed for school.

A great advantage of this new arrangement is that the prep year is an **integral part of compulsory education**. Therefore, it is expected that introducing a preparatory year in primary schooling should have a positive impact on children from socially and economically challenged or low-opportunity groups – that, as we have seen, have the smallest participation rate in pre-primary education which leads to educational disadvantage later on after signing up for primary school. The experience gained in projects that promoted summer kindergartens, implemented by the Ministry of Education and other governmental and non-governmental organizations, has evidenced the beneficial effects of such programmes on children's social and school integration, as well as increased chances for academic success. Whilst major results can be noticed after a few week-long interventions, compulsory participation in a prep year will increase the chances for school integration and academic achievement, with lasting effects during compulsory schooling years.

Last but not least, this will lead to a more harmonised compulsory school starting age (at present, especially in urban areas, children start 1st grade at around 7 years of age) and, consequently, to **more homogenous age groups**, with benefits to students and teachers.

Changes in Lower Secondary Education

At the moment, during compulsory schooling right after 8th grade, students must embark on a differentiated pathway (high school with different sections and profiles, apprenticeship or vocational school), which means that at the end of compulsory education they cannot meet the same standards because they do not benefit from the same training. The measure to extend lower secondary education to five years (thus comprising 5th-9th grades) aims at providing a continuous and unitary educational pathway which allows compulsory schooling to end after lower secondary level. The advantages to this come primarily from the possibility of designing the academic content in a coherent manner in order to attain the purpose of compulsory schooling at the end of lower secondary stage through a unitary curriculum.

This change also postpones the time when students have to choose the type of school they want to attend after 8th grade, from the age of 14-15 years to 16 years, which increases the chances of them making conscious and informed decisions about their own future. This future may mean continuing their studies or entering labour market, which they can legally do at the age of 16 years. A lower secondary 9th grade will allow more children to finish compulsory schooling in a context where, at present, the drop-out rate is high, especially in 8th grade. This phenomenon is more common to children from socially and economically disadvantaged families who cannot afford to pay board and lodging costs in order to send them to school in another town.

But there is still the issue of the options available for continuing school after compulsory education given that *Schools of Arts and Trades*, the only vocational option that could lead to a qualification, have

been closed down and currently there is no other vocational option in upper secondary education besides technological high schools. As indicated in the previous chapter, without a viable alternative for carrying on with school, students and their families opt for leaving school before the end of secondary education (8th grade) once the child can engage in work inside or outside the household.

Teaching Staff Development

According to the new regulations, every member of the teaching staff will be conferred the same title (teacher) and will need to hold a higher education degree. At present, the teaching staff hired in the education system is under-trained especially in the area of practical work. Teacher initial training will change to require bachelor degrees in one specialty, a two-year teaching master's and one-year internship in an educational establishment under the supervision of a mentor teacher.

Bachelor degree holders are encouraged to get an interest in launching a teaching career through teaching master's scholarships funded from the state budget that equal the net salary of a starting teacher. The applicant may land a teaching position for their one-year internship through an open competition for available positions/chairs or based on a fixed-term employment contract for one school year. At the end of their internship, the starting teacher must sit the **national** teacher certification exam whose passing score confers the **title of teacher with the right to teach in pre-university education**.

The initial training system continues to face major challenges such as: boosting the participation of youth from socially and economically challenged settings, from remote or rural communities (and going back to teach in the schools of their communities); supplying the needed teaching staff in lines of study where the private sector offers better job opportunities (like foreign languages, IT).

As for good practice related to management and governance, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports will set up the **national body of experts on educational management** following the competition-based selection of teachers who make proof of having graduated from a certified training programme in educational management, with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits. In these programmes, supporting low-opportunity students' access to and participation in quality education is foreseen to play an important part of the training curriculum.

At the same time, in the new context, educational establishments and local governments may decide on establishing school consortiums (i.e. contractual partnerships between educational establishments) that allow the free movement of staff across the schools that are members of the consortium; shared usage of the resources available to the educational establishments that are part of the consortium; expansion of learning opportunities provided to students and mutual recognition of their learning achievements and appraisal scores.

At the level of the educational establishment, decisions on vacant teaching positions, open competitions and teaching staff employment are made by the school board.

Educational Portfolio

For the very first time, the new act introduces the **educational portfolio** which will comprise all the degrees, certificates or other documents awarded following an assessment of competences **acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts**. The educational portfolio is the central piece of learning evaluation and will stand for an educational identity card that will be used starting with the

prep year. Its main components are: assessment of the child's cognitive, emotional and social skills at the end of prep year; assessment of basic skills acquisition at the end of 2nd grade: reading-writing-numerical literacy; student appraisal at the end of 6th grade through cross-curricular tests: language and communication (Romanian language and a foreign language), mathematics and science. The scores will be used to draw up individual learning plans for students, with better chances to identify any lagging behind and develop remedial strategies. Moreover, the scores contribute to school and vocational guidance later on as together with individual plans they are communicated to students' parents.

Another major initiative that comes to support children at risk of dropping out, with school adjustment problems and poor attainment is that of assessing at the end of 4th grade the basic skills acquired in primary school to diagnose the education system based on the model of international tests. These tests may offer comprehensive information about the groups of students that are lagging behind the most and about key areas of intervention in their case. New, better targeted policies could be developed, especially in what concerns remedial education and integrated measures, offering school and social support to students and families.

At the same time, at the end of 9th grade, a national compulsory cross-curricular appraisal of all students will be performed. The results, expressed as scores similar to international tests, cumulate the child's performance at an interdisciplinary test on communication skills in their mother tongue and an international auxiliary language, at a test on numerical and science skills and one on computer skills. The national appraisal scoring goes into the student's Educational Portfolio and becomes an important element for the early detection of school factor risks for children at risk of dropping out. As a direct consequence, more informed decisions will be possible, targeting better the categories at risk.

Challenges remain with regards to out-of-school children issues and the capacity of the education and training system to recognise the skills these children have acquired in non-formal and informal settings. Moreover, a specific methodology needs to be developed to allow these children to be registered with school and vocational guidance centres in order to be assessed and to benefit from dedicated support. This way, Educational Portfolios may become a major tool for dropouts too in terms of their social and professional integration, collecting evidences of competences acquired in formal but also in non-formal and informal contexts.

Another challenge comes from the current low level of cooperation between school actors. All the other major skills at the end of 9th grade are assessed by the class teacher, school counsellor and the teachers of the respective class, while avoiding academic failure (and thus drop-out) requires strong cooperation between all these school players. In reality, teaching focuses more on reaching standards than on remedial/support activities. Hence, especially in rural schools where many teaching positions are still not covered by qualified teachers, these activities have still not attained expected active involvement in common interventions.

3.2. Other relevant on-going supply side policies

This section briefly presents recent strategies and policies relevant for the out of school children. Even if not explicitly targeted for a specific category at risk identified in previous chapters, these initiatives are highly relevant for the improvement of the situation of these students, aiming at **building an education system that is stable, equitable, efficient, and predictable**: The 2009-2012 Government Programme, the "Education and Research for a Knowledge-Based Society" Strategy, the National

Development Plan 2007-2013, the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, the National Reform Programme 2007-2010.

We will next outline a series of on-going programmes that target this objective by: ensuring equity and access to education and training; school network rationalisation and long-term stabilisation; science- and fact-based modernization of the curriculum; making early childhood education a public good; quality assurance for pre-university education; efficient system decentralization – coherent regulations, careful process control and scaling up standard costing per student. All these measures document the results and good practices related to supply side policies and strategies, the profiles of children in the 5 dimensions of exclusion and the key disparities within them.

3.2.1. Ensuring Equity and Access to Education and Training

Romania has not set national targets for drop-out reduction. Nonetheless, it has taken on board the benchmark values of the objectives set down in the Europe 2020 Strategy. The memorandum on the *Approval of Final Values of Romania's Objectives for Europe 2020 Strategy* sets the pre-university education target of cutting down the early school leaving rate to 14.8% by 2013 and to 11.3% by 2020.

To reach the above-mentioned objectives, social programmes and programmes addressed to disadvantaged groups will be further implemented, whilst compensatory education programmes or *Second Chance* programmes will be scaled up for those who have temporarily left formal basic education, including programmes financed by the European Social Fund. The state budget will continue to fund:

- *Provision of school supplies* to children who attend day classes at primary and lower secondary public schools, whose families' average net monthly income per family member is up to 50% of the national minimum gross base salary;
- *Money for high school* – financial aid to students from low-income families;
- The *Croissant and Milk* programme for primary and lower secondary school children who attend public institutions and for preschool children from half-day public kindergartens;
- "*Euro 200*" – granting financial support to stimulate computer purchase for students from socially and economically disadvantaged environments, etc.

Even without specific targets, educational authorities declare that they will continue to monitor truancy and drop-out, especially among Roma students, and that they will develop and implement local, regional and national information, training, monitoring and communication structures and mechanisms in relevant areas such as: desegregation/discrimination, prevention and fight against school violence, inclusion, etc.

But the means to promote extracurricular, extra-scholastic programmes and activities as well as educational alternatives are still insufficiently developed. For example, as far as methodology and funding mechanisms are concerned it is still unclear what the means are to scale up the "School After School" programme, although this is appreciated by parents and school players alike as it allows students to continue their activities in the school setting at the end of their lessons, to consolidate the

knowledge acquired in class or to catch up, while ensuring child supervision and protection. At the same time, it is not obvious to what extent local authorities want and can offer financial support to this program as they are often facing difficulties in covering the current costs related to school functioning (utilities, basic resources, small investments in infrastructure etc.).

School Network Rationalisation and Long-Term Stabilisation

Educational establishments with and without legal personality, with reduced student headcount – below the threshold prescribed by law – will continue to merge, the classes with a smaller number of students than the lowest threshold will merge and simultaneous classes will be dissolved. This optimization will primarily lead to increased learning opportunities for students due to more concentrated material, financial and human resources available to schools. Starting with the 2010-2011 school year, the school network was restructured through: a reduction of nearly 1,000 educational establishments with and without legal personality; a reduction of approximately 1,000 classes with low student headcount. Even if the impact of distance on school attendance is not systematically assessed/researched, recent studies on school drop-out (Voicu, 2010; Surdu, 2011) indicate that difficulties in reaching school, especially in seasons with extreme temperatures is still indicated by families as an important reason why keeping the child at home.

According to Ministry of Education data, the school network optimization performed during the 2010-2011 school year has led to an increase in the student-teacher ratio from 13.37 in the 2009-2010 school year to 13.82 in 2010-2011; an increase in the average number of students in a class from 21.33 in the 2009-2010 school year to 22.03 in 2010-2011; a reduction in the number of positions filled by under-qualified teaching staff by 45.1%, namely 2,379 positions; a reduction in the number of positions filled by retired teachers by 32.46%, namely 1,223 positions; an increase in the share of qualified teaching staff in pre-university education from 97.83% to 98.75% through open competitions for teaching position vacancies.

Modernizing school infrastructure is one of the key factors to learner attainment. However even if MECTS will continue to implement projects aimed at addressing the educational disadvantage of students who learn in out-dated schools, the coverage of these initiatives is still far from the needed investment: the project on *School Infrastructure Rehabilitation* – 320 locations to benefit from investment: pre-university schools will be rehabilitated, modernized and furnished in order to re-establish school building safety, hygiene and sanitation, and comfort; the project *Early Childhood Education Reform in Romania*– 750 locations rehabilitated, consolidated, extended, undergo capital repairs and will be furnished; the project on social inclusion – Part 2 – *The Programme for Inclusive Pre-Primary Education*– 8 locations to benefit from investment in communities with high shares of Roma population.

As far as pre-university education goes, the investing priorities of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports have their eye on fund provision to objectives that can be reached in 2011, in particular to schools that have taken over students from closed down or merged educational establishments and to institutions that are directly funded by MECTS (i.e. Children's Palace and Clubs). The **School Campus** development programme for lower secondary level could offer the opportunity to high-school students from categories at risk to study in schools in other locations than the place of residence. Combined with social support schemes, this policy could address the current exclusion

challenge due to limited available campus places and the high costs for students with a disadvantaged background.

3.2.2. Curriculum Modernization

Following the first major reform of the national curriculum carried out as part of a World Bank assistance programme over the period 1998-2001, the Romanian education system is now at a crucial point where it will introduce a new curriculum based on key competences that can better meet current individual and social needs. To this end, the curricular framework is being prepared as the base for national curriculum design and implementation and for the writing of framework programmes and syllabuses.

If in preschool education a modern early childhood education curriculum was already promoted in 2008 for children from birth to the age of 6/7 years (as part of the Early Childhood Education Reform Programme 2006-2011 coordinated by the Externally Financed Project Management Unit), over the next period the curriculum modernization process is expected to make it more relevant, attractive and accessible also to low-opportunity primary and lower secondary school children. The main directions for curricular reform are, among other things, the promotion of interdisciplinarity, of a school-decided curriculum, acceptance of non-formal and informal education, digitalization and applicability to everyday life.

All these steps are a pre-requisite for designing new and more attractive and more relevant textbooks which are expected to be available to students no later than the 2011-2012 school year. Moreover, as indicated in the impact assessment of the previous curricular reform programme, appropriate teacher training with regard to new curriculum application is the key to success for this policy, especially the training of those teachers who work with children at risk of dropping out. Therefore, traditional focus on support given to pre-university educational performance and excellence activities will have to be paired with comprehensive support needs assessment for low-opportunity children. Participation in international tests (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) will help to assess the level of knowledge acquisition and also these students' efficiency in following the new curriculum.

3.2.3. Making Early Childhood Education a Public Good

For the children at risk that fall under Dimension 1, the initiatives taken to develop the early childhood education concept and to create the national implementing background for early childhood education programmes are most relevant. An impactful programme in this area is the Early Childhood Education Reform Project (ECERP), a national project co-financed by the Romanian Government and the Council of Europe Development Bank, implemented over the period 2007-2011 and holding a budget of EUR 105 million. The key areas of intervention aim at: improving kindergarten management; improving the existing infrastructure through rehabilitation works; refresher courses for teachers working in the system; increasing the educational service quality at ante-preschool level.

Another important programme is the Programme for Inclusive Early Childhood Education (PIECE), financed by World Bank (EUR 6.1 million) and the Romanian Government (EUR 1.7 million) as a component of the Social Inclusion Programme; it is executed over the period of 2007-2011, with a budget of EUR 7.8 million. The key intervention areas of this programme focus on: creating and improving educational conditions in order to ensure minimum operating standards for the poorest

schools in the most disadvantaged communities, including Roma communities, leading to increased access to initial, early and basic education; increasing the quality of outputs as well as of educational inputs; raising decision-makers' awareness and capacity building in the areas of management, planning and evaluation.

These programmes were complemented by the initiatives of non-governmental and international organizations, which focused on the main causes to child non-participation also highlighted in this report related to preschool education: under-developed network which translates into insufficient number of places available in kindergartens; inappropriate furnishings and improper operating conditions; and the family habit that encourages a child to stay home until s/he starts school (Surdu, 2011). In relation to parenting in particular, a major role was played by the UNICEF programme carried out in partnership with Our Children Foundation and the Ministry of Education and aimed at parenting skills building (with almost 30,000 parents as beneficiaries) or the projects carried out by UNICEF in partnership with Holt Romania and the National Child Protection Agency which have resulted in Community Resource Centres set up in 8 counties across Romania.

EU-funded programmes, especially those falling into the Sectoral Operational Programme – Human Resources Development, currently underway, may provide significant support to boost child participation in preschool education addressing both demand and supply side challenges. Here are a few relevant examples:

- ***Together with Children for a Quality School Start – Digital Teaching Tools for Prep-Year Preschool Children*** (budget: approximately USD 7 million). The project aims at increasing school adaptability associated with prevention of academic failure in prep-year pre-schoolers by creating/testing/piloting digital teaching tools and an alternative methodology for school start preparation.
- ***All in Kindergarten, All in First Grade – integrated programmes to increase access to education and the educational level of the children from disadvantaged communities, with focus on Roma, over 2008-2009*** (budget: around USD 6 million). The project aims at preventing and correcting early school leaving among children aged 5-8 years from 420 disadvantaged communities with high shares of Roma, mainly from rural and small urban localities, by implementing educational alternatives for pre-schoolers and their parents. The target group is comprised of 8,400 children at risk of early school leaving, especially children from rural areas, Roma communities or poor families, participants in the national “Summer Kindergarten” programme; 6,000 students at risk of early school leaving, especially children from rural areas, Roma communities or poor families, children with poor academic achievements, participants in the national “Summer Kindergarten” programme; 2,100 people – specialised staff trained and involved in the implementation of alternative educational programmes: “Summer Kindergarten”, “School After School”, “Parenting School”; 10,000 parents/legal guardians of children at risk of early school leaving, mostly from Roma communities, rural areas and poor population, who will benefit from information and counselling on child education; 5,000 parents/legal guardians of children at risk of early school leaving mostly from Roma communities, rural areas and poor population, participants in the “Parenting School” programme; 8,000 children from disadvantaged communities/families (including from the Summer Kindergarten programme) who benefited from subsidies consisting of a basic

clothing kit for 1st grade enrolment; 420 representatives of disadvantaged communities – community promoters – trained and engaged in the community development process. Moreover, a preschool prep learning kit was developed in the project, “*From Here... to 1st Grade*”, containing the textbook-notebook for the 23 days of preschool preparation and related learning materials (pre-schooler component – 20,000 copies) and the Guidelines for the Summer Kindergarten Teacher (teacher component – 1,000 copies) as well as a kit with specific teaching/learning materials useful for the implementation of the “School After School” educational programme.

3.3. Demand side educational and social policies directly targeting excluded groups

To address socio-economic and cultural barriers facing children at risk of dropping out, in the last few years a series of specific intervention policies and programmes have been developed and implemented both at national and regional levels. With the main goal of increasing the quality of services provision in pre-university education, these initiatives targeted mainly demand side issues (socio-cultural aspects, improving social and material conditions for the family and the community).

Besides the above-mentioned policy measures, in this section we will look at other examples of relevant interventions and strategies, described from a needs perspective of the main vulnerable groups identified in Chapter 1: Roma children, children from rural areas, children from poor families, and children with SEN.

• Demand Side Policies Addressing Roma Children

Some of the policy measures taken by Romania in the context of the European Union accession – directly or indirectly – aimed at improving the condition of Roma population at different levels (social, economic, financial, cultural, educational, community, public administration, etc.). These documents made the general framework of public Roma policies: *The Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma* (2001-2010), *The National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Promotion Plan* (2002-2012), *The Joint Inclusion Memorandum* (2005-2010). To these added the signing of the European initiative *The Decade of Roma Inclusion* (2005-2015), whereby Romania took the commitment to promote active policies for Roma inclusion, with a focus on four priority areas: education, health, employment, housing – in parallel to the cross-cutting areas of fight against poverty, discrimination and gender inequality.

Nevertheless, the surveys conducted in this area (Stoian, 2010) highlight certain gaps between the provisions set forth in these policy documents and reality, as well as the lack of mechanisms implemented to monitor and evaluate ameliorative interventions for Roma. But at the same time, at some levels, the efforts to improve the condition of Roma, including from the point of view of school participation, have had positive outcomes. We could name a few initiatives that addressed socio-cultural barriers (language, prejudices and stereotypes, etc.):

- Social and media campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of Roma prejudices and advocating for equal access to social/educational services (examples: The 2009 *Dosta! Leave Your Prejudices Behind, Get to Know the Roma!* Campaign; the campaign entitled *Roma discrimination is picked up*

at home. Get to know them before you judge them! carried out in 2008 and 2009; the campaign *Jan angle, Romale! (Take a Step Forward!)* from 2009 targeting the Roma population);

- Setting up *Inclusive Education Resource Centres* at county level – with a role to document, advise, monitor and offer support in the area of inclusive education;
- Creating Romani language classes (as of 1990) to train Romani language kindergarten teachers and schoolteachers;
- An appointed inspector for Roma matters in each County School Inspectorate – with a role to monitor, advise and lend support to schools with Roma students and Roma/Romani language teachers;
- Establishing the school mediation practice by creating school mediator positions as an interface between school and community, with a role to enhance communication between (Roma) community and school/teachers (most of them non-Roma);
- Developing “second chance” programmes – as part of the *Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups* PHARE programme – allowing dropouts to continue their studies (in 2007 this programme reached national coverage);
- Diversity issues integrated into the curriculum – as stipulated in Ministerial Order No 1529/2007; later, syllabuses were developed and approved for the optional disciplines *Intercultural Education* (lower secondary education) and *Human Rights* (high school);
- Implementing school desegregation measures (under Ministerial Order No 1540/2007);
- Implementing programmes co-financed by ESF funds through SOP-HRD, promoting participation in pre-primary education as a success factor to school debut; examples: the *Roma Children Get Ready for Kindergarten* project (MECTS, Save the Children, 2009-2011); *All in Kindergarten – All in First Grade* (MECTS, Ruhama Foundation, 2009-2010); these programmes should be replicated at county level as building up Roma child participation in preschool education is one of the measures with the highest impact on reducing drop-out or never attending school risks (Sarău, 2011). Lack of basic communication skills in Romanian, a low intercultural teaching approach or a non-inclusive school culture are entailing high difficulties for a Roma child to adapt to school culture without any prior schooling experience.
- Developing continuing professional development programmes for teachers focused on inclusive education, intercultural education, child rights – through related programmes offered by MECTS in partnership with UNICEF (on educational Romanipen, Roma fundamental values, non-discrimination and non-segregation in school, implemented by Teacher Training Houses or NGO’s addressing Roma issues (Grigore et al, 2009) or as a national programme component (for example, *Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups* PHARE programmes);

- Developing non-formal and extracurricular educational programmes on ethnic diversity (parenting activities, school contests, exhibitions, activities hosted by Children's Palace, etc.).

A number of Roma condition monitoring reports point however towards the insufficient application of such measures (Duminică, 2010). Thus, it is considered that Romanian schools have stayed preponderantly monocultural, that teachers are under-trained on interculturality during their pre-service training and that this is exclusively dealt with through continuing training (Stoian, 2010), while some research shows that segregation-associated phenomena are present in more than two thirds of the schools with Roma students (Surdu, 2008). Apart from these limitations, the previously mentioned policies have managed to create a "friendlier school", where Roma and Romanian children learn together, with fewer socio-cultural risks determining school non-participation – at least in the schools where national or local projects have been implemented (Ulrich, 2009).

- **Demand Side Policies Addressing Children and Adolescents from Rural Areas**

In rural areas, the main educational interventions were implemented through the *Project for Rural Education*. The measures aimed in particular at improving material conditions and furnishings and developing human resources in schools – in the sense of HR training and upgrading for successful curriculum implementation: teacher continuing training programmes; training programmes for unskilled staff; school-community relationship development programmes. It is indirectly assumed that human resources development in rural schools and the promotion of a more active school-community partnership have helped address socio-cultural barriers present in rural settings (lower motivation for school participation, mistrust in education as a key to academic success in the context of precarious socioeconomic environment).

Moreover, we need to mention programmes promoted at county level by Child Protection Authorities and through County Resource and Educational Assistance Centres meant to support children left home alone by migrant parents. Particularly in rural areas, children's access to counselling or psychological assistance services is much more difficult and they are thus more exposed to the risks associated with this phenomenon.

- **Demand Side Policies Addressing Children and Adolescents from Poorest Quintile**

The policies addressed to children from poor communities have focused mainly on programmes implemented to improve their precarious economic condition. Thus, the impact assessment of the *Croissant and Milk* programme targeting primary and lower secondary school children in public schools and preschool children in half-day public kindergartens (Arpinte, 2009) indicates that this programme has proved to be particularly useful for disadvantaged children, for rural school children, Roma school children and children from poor families. As far as these groups of children are concerned, the programme had a positive influence in terms of the reduction of drop-out risks in preschool and primary school children, especially in the first years of implementation.

As already presented another effective programme is the *School After School* programme. At present, such programmes are run for Roma children with support from structural funds and national and international foundations (for example, the project started by Roma Education Fund in 40 communities across the country with the majority of Roma population).

3.4. Social protection policies relevant for out of school children and adolescents at risk

The social protection and assistance system comes to round out the already mentioned measures with regard to different types of material or financial support (textbooks, school supplies, free transportation, provision of daily meals, scholarships, etc.) benefiting school children or their families.

Unfortunately, Romania allocates the smallest percentage of GDP to social expenditure (16.4% compared to the European average of 31.9%). The percentage allocated strictly to social protection is only 13% compared to the European average of 26.7% (ICCV, 2010), and in most of the cases funds are granted for social benefits and protection services and less for prevention services. As in the case of educational measures, the allocation of resources is insufficient and, in addition to that, the Romanian social protection system has to deal with inequity in the allocation of resources for different decentralization levels or even different areas.

Pensions - The Romanian pension system – including old age, disability and survivor pensions - is based on a PAYG scheme mixed with a recently introduced (2007/2008) private pension system. The structure comprises three pillars: the first one refers to the social insurance public pension system, while the second and the third make the private component of the system. The pension programme data reported in Table 1 refer to the social insurance public pension system.

Work Injury - Temporary disability benefits are contributory. The benefit is paid by the employer until recovery or the certification of permanent disability.

Sickness and Maternity - Sickness benefits financially cover the periods of time during which the insured cannot attend work and thus is unable to work for wages. Sickness benefits are complemented by illness prevention and work capacity recovery indemnities. Besides cash transfers, the insured is also offered in-kind benefits in the form of recovery treatment or professional rehabilitation training. With regard to mothers and children, the Romanian state offers maternity benefits, maternity risk benefits as well as childcare allowances.

Health – medical benefits summarize the Romanian healthcare system. The benefits consist of medical services for which every Romanian citizen is eligible. It entails basic package of services covered by national and county insurance bodies. Currently a new reform of the healthcare system is foreseen, with a draft law launched for public and expert debate.

Table 15. Key Programmes of the Social Protection System

Title of the programme	Start date	Programme and Benefit Type	Targeting	Objectives	Existing Coverage
PENSIONS: Old Age; Disability Pension; Survivor Pension; Funeral Grant	1912, 2001 (1), (3)	Social insurance; in cash; contributory	Old Age: Age 63 and 9 months with at least 12 years and 6 months of contributions (men) or age 58 and 9 months with at least 12 years and 6 months of contributions (women). Disability Pension Partial or total disability regardless of age. Survivor Pension Eligible survivors who are a widow(er) who satisfies age and marriage conditions or has a disability and children up to age 16. Funeral Grant Pays for the death of the insured or the insured's dependent.	Consumption Smoothing; Social Security	5,498,800 of Social Insurance Pensioners in 2010: of which 871.8 receive disability pensions, 535,200 receive survivor pensions and 1,400 thousands receive various other forms of social allowance. (2), (4).
Temporary Disability Benefits	1912; 2000 (1), (5)	Social insurance; contributory; in cash; in-kind	Individuals who sustained injuries at the workplace or contracted occupational diseases.	Consumption smoothing in case of work injury or occupational diseases.	
Sickness Benefits	1930; 2000	Social Insurance / Social Assistance based on the principle of social solidarity; in cash	The insured must have at least 1 month of contributions in the 12 calendar months before the incapacity began; no qualifying conditions apply for emergency surgery and in cases of tuberculosis, AIDS, or other contagious diseases	Social Security; Consumption Smoothing in case of Sickness	
State children allowances	1993	Social Assistance, Universal, non-contributory	Paid for children younger than age 18 (older if a full-time student or a trainee). (1)	Improve child well-being	
Social Assistance	2006	Social Assistance; non-contributory, means-tested	Paid to families and persons without income or with low income. (1)	Poverty relief	
Benefits for the Elderly	2000	Social Assistance, non-contributory, in cash, in-kind, means-tested (10)	Elderly individuals with no/insufficient income, who do not have any family, who do not have a home, who are physically unable to care for themselves (10).	Improve the life quality of the elderly segment of the population	

Source: Country Snapshot UNICEF

Social Assistance – Although no coverage or expenditure data is available for this sector, several programs have been started in the last decade (2000-2010). These consist mainly of social assistance benefits meant as poverty relief measures for the vulnerable segments of society (those with no or

insufficient sources of income, people with special physical disabilities or illnesses - such as blindness and HIV/AIDS - or some segments of the elderly population who fall through the social safety net). Also, as part of the Romanian state measures to tackle demographic decline, cash transfers are offered for new-borns (both at their birth – one-off lump sum, and as support – monthly transfers).

Children are also supported through universal non-contributory child allowances offered on the principle of social solidarity. Although there are several types of benefits, their worth is reduced due both to inflation and budget reduction. For example, according to ICCV data (2011), the most widespread social benefit for children – the child benefit –accounted in 2010 for nearly 7% of the national minimum gross wage and for 9% of the national minimum net wage. The gradual downsizing of this benefit is obvious if we compare it to 1989 as its current value stands for around one third of that year’s value.

Involving the education system in the implementation of the child benefit provision mechanism made receipt of this support conditional on attendance of compulsory mainstream education. The Constitutional Court ruled out this conditionality by Decision 277 in March 2006. It is interesting to in the next school year a slight drop in primary and lower secondary enrolment rates (2007/2008).

At the beginning of 2011, a complementary allowance granted to poor families was once again conditioned by school attendance and the system stakeholders sustained that the measure resulted in some improvement of the drop-out phenomenon. Even if is too early to assess the real impact on the conditionality of this support on school attendance, it should be underlined that without other accompanying measures (i.e. improving the school-related factors), this conditionality could harm the intrinsic value of attending school, creating long-term expectations on receiving a benefit for staying in school. Similar NGO initiatives, providing food coupons to families sending their children to school (i.e. OvidiuRrom project) are also facing this risk.

Table 16. Financing of key programmes

Title of the programme	Coverage (2010)	Cost (2009)	Financing
PENSIONS: Old Age; Disability Pension; Survivor Pension; Funeral Grant	Total Number of Social Insurance Pensioners (2010): 5,498,800 of which 871,800 receive disability pensions, 535,200 thousands receive survivor pensions and 1.4 thousands receive some various other forms of social allowance (funeral grant included). (2), (4).	Social Insurance = 8% of GDP (2009) (4), (5).	Pensions are calculated using a points system (Public PAYG Pension System). Employers pay 19.5% to 29.5% of the employee’s gross salary as a pension contribution. Social security pension contributions for employees amount to 9.5% of monthly gross wages. (3)
Temporary Disability Benefits		967,186,790 thousands lei (8)	Insured person: None; voluntary contributors pay 1% of the average monthly income; Self-employed person: 1% of the average monthly income; Employer: Between 0.15% and 0.85% of average gross monthly income, according to the assessed degree of risk; Government: Provides subsidies. (1) Administration: National Pension and Social Insurance Fund; National House for Health

			Insurance. Supervision: Ministry of Labour, Family, and Social Protection;
Sickness Benefits		583.431 thousands lei (8)	<i>Insured person</i> = None; <i>Self-employed person</i> = 0.85% of earnings; <i>Employer</i> = 0.85% of covered payroll; <i>Government</i> = None; Administration: National Health Insurance Fund Supervision: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour, Family, and Social Protection;

Finally, benefits are also granted in order to cover heating costs. It is not possible to analyze the trends in programme coverage and spending due to data unavailability. However, it is possible to highlight those instruments/programmes that received greater focus. Social insurance pensions represent an important part of the system with public expenditures equal to 8% of GDP in 2009.

- **Demand Side Policies Addressing Children with Special Educational Needs**

Recent years' policies have advanced a series of specific measures that come to support the integration of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools, in various areas: support planning and services, human resources, and material resources needed to promote inclusive practices. Nationally, interventions were promoted by two main categories of actors (Ulrich, 2009; Horga and Jigău, 2008):

- **Public institutions** working or holding responsibilities in this department, which focused on starting and promoting legal measures and national strategies and on programme and project implementation. A few examples: *The National Strategy for Community Action* from 2004 (implementing a series of actions in the area of inclusion, carried out by school children and teachers); *The Together in the Same School Programme* (promoting varied and efficient educational services capable of meeting every child's needs); *PHARE RO Programme – Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups* (making access to education for children with SEN a priority); *The Early Childhood Education Reform Project 2007-2011* (which promoted educational support provided to children with special educational needs from very small ages, 0-3 years, in order to facilitate their integration in mainstream preschool education); *The Project for Inclusive Education 2007-2011* (part of the Social Inclusion Programme, aimed at providing equal access to quality early childhood education for children from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups – including children with special educational needs).
- **Nongovernmental organizations** and international organizations active in the field – which implemented a series of programmes and projects with international or national support to promote integrated education, such as: UNICEF, Open Society Foundation, REF, RENINCO, Save the Children, Centre Education 2000+.

The following types of intervention are found in these policies:

- Implementation of human resources training programmes (for school managers, teachers) on issues relative to inclusive education, non-discrimination, holistic approach to children;
- Recruitment of human resources (support teachers, school counsellors) with a role to sustain children with SEN and their parents in order to raise awareness of disability and work together to support them;
- Setting up functional inclusive education resource centres (under GD No 1252/2006) – subsequently taken over by County Resource and Educational Assistance Centres;
- Development of specific tools to support the integration of children with SEN from special schools into mainstream schools: LSP (learning support programmes for students with learning difficulties); PIP (personalised intervention programmes).

The related studies previously cited highlight some shortcomings and the lack of resources needed for the sustainability of some of the policies dedicated to children with SEN (Horga and Jigău, 2008). The organisational and administrative steps taken towards these children's integration into mainstream education were not paired with an efficient child rights awareness and inclusive climate promotion campaign at the level of schools, of the civil society or of decision makers. In this context, socio-cultural barriers that affect Roma children for example overlap those specific to children with SEN as these two groups of children notably are facing the most stereotypes and prejudices in school and society (Horga and Jigău, 2008).

As in the case of preschool education, many projects are underway for at-risk primary and lower secondary school children, financed through the Sectoral Operational Programme – Human Resources Development, such as *Support to the special education system through a dedicated educational portal* (budget: approximately USD 8 million). The project aims at developing and stimulating the special education system in order to offer children with special educational needs (those with mental disabilities in particular) a better understanding of the environment and the society in which they grow, as well as to ensure their integration and active and responsible participation in social life.

3.5. Efficient System Decentralization and Scaling Up Standard Costing per Student

Recent measures in the area of decentralization leave more room to school autonomy. Carrying on the pre-university education system decentralization has direct relevance to students at risk. By taking on and fulfilling new roles and functions, schools may have greater capacity to meet these students' needs by recruiting qualified teachers, by developing specific programmes/projects or by promoting a relevant school-decided curriculum. Nonetheless, funding and reporting mechanisms and procedures developed in a decentralised education system may have a negative impact on the schools located in socially and economically challenged areas with limited local resources. The implementation of standard costing reconciled with quality standards and student-specific educational needs, required in order to manage

and coordinate a school in a decentralized setting should be systematically monitored. Thus, any under-funding may be corrected through specific assistance programmes (complementary financing).

The mainstreaming of the “funding per student” scheme (after a long period of historical cost-based budget allocations) makes public resource allocation transparent and links it to strategic educational targets. Nevertheless, efficient decentralization and bringing decisions closer to beneficiaries must be seconded by coherent regulations and process control, which requires improved management control standards and developing specific training programmes for school management teams. From this perspective, quality assurance projects play a highly important role, especially in the areas that educational risk mapping identified as the most disadvantaged:

- ***Development of the national quality management and assurance system in pre-university education*** (budget: approximately USD 6 million). The project aims at developing the national quality management and assurance system and building a quality culture as a key means to increase competitiveness and efficiency in the pre-university education system. The target group is comprised of: management, guidance and control staff active in the MECTS system, inspectors at County/Bucharest School Inspectorate and experts involved in education and initial training quality assessment.
- ***Development of a quality culture and delivery of quality education in the pre-university educational system in Romania through application of reference standards***(budget: approximately USD 6.5 million). The project aims at building capacity for the pre-university education system to deliver quality education through the application of reference standards and through assistance to education and training service providers for the application of quality/reference standards with the view of regular quality assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of existing school participation data allowed for OOSC categories and characteristics to be outlined. Unfortunately, the lack of disaggregated data got in the way of an in-depth analysis of school participation barriers and bottlenecks that these children are faced with. Moreover, without systematic impact assessments of policies aimed at boosting participation and fighting drop-out, it is impossible to accurately indicate priority areas of intervention for improving the situation of these children or means to make current programmes and strategies more efficient and more effective. Starting from the analysis of available data, this last section of the report tries however to formulate a series of general recommendations relevant to all OOSC categories. This section equally suggests a number of specific interventions for each vulnerable category that has been identified: Roma children, children from rural communities, children from poor families, and children with special educational needs.

Although these recommendations are applicable to all the five dimensions of exclusion targeted in the OOSC methodology, the main focus is placed on dimensions 4 and 5 – primary and lower secondary school children at risk of dropping out. This is determined both by the data on hand (collected mainly by using administrative data available in schools) and by the pragmatic focus on drop-out prevention to the detriment of interventions meant to recover school leavers. Present INS data show that, in Romania, the majority of current out-of-school children had a prior experience of enrolment in the formal education system. Moreover, many surveys indicate that interventions aimed at recovering dropouts have smaller success rates and require more resources (and therefore bi-annual monitoring and interventions are often lagging behind). The analysis of profiles of children who have already dropped out offered important insights for understating the risk factors for children in Dimensions 4 and 5 and for

a. General Recommendations

Collecting and Reporting Drop-Out Data

The distortions identified with regard to students' real academic record and the inconsistencies between gradebook entries and statistical statements as reported in an ad hoc cohort analysis of the drop-out phenomenon (IES, 2011) point towards two main problem categories in this area. First of all, there are problems related to a school's context, determined by the little importance given to these aspects by some educational establishments (acceptance of drop-out as an everyday reality); teachers' insufficient knowledge of relevant regulations; little professional experience of the staff responsible for the statistical reporting of student academic data, with effects on the reported data; personal interpretation of the regulation. As far as these problems are concerned, there is firstly a need to better train the staff holding relevant responsibilities, while more efficient monitoring and checking instruments should be in place both at the level of County School Inspectorates and of each school.

The second category refers to these "methodological" dysfunctions/problems arising from lack of clarity and precision in definitions and from insufficient harmonisation/coherence between relevant definitions/regulations. These comprise the inaccurate/ambiguous definition of students' academic status in grade book sections and the lack of harmony/coherence between definitions and rules on how non-attendance should be documented (drop-out, withdrawal, grade retention, other situations, etc.) as specified in the Organisation and Operating Rules, in the instructions on completing specific grade book

sections, and in the guidelines for completing school participation statistical questionnaires (SQs) administered by NIS.

All these dysfunctions affect the accuracy and the quality of information on student academic record not only at the level of the researched schools, but potentially at the level of the entire education system. Hence, conceptually speaking, drop-out should be clearly and consistently defined in order to allow system-level decision makers, management teams and teaching staff to use a unifying methodology in this department. Without this, the drop-out phenomenon will remain difficult to detect and measure.

Developing a School Cohort Evolution Tracking System

For a deeper analysis of out-of-school children's characteristics (for example, family's living conditions, engagement in circulatory or work migration, sibling influence, academic failure record, etc.), a long-term school cohort evolution tracking system needs to be developed and implemented. A national representative sample (of minimum 5,000 children) could be surveyed in various stages of the educational pathway, with research repeated every four school cohorts (Voicu, 2010). Alternatively, an electronic matriculation register could be created allowing for the real-time monitoring of each student's school pathway. In this case, for every child that a school identifies to be most at risk of dropping out basic information on risk factors must be collected. This type of research may offer documented answers about school, family or community effects on an individual's educational pathway and on their later professional course. Identifying OOSC's characteristics will relevantly inform efficient policies in education and related areas (social area, health).

Strict School Monitoring of Truancy, Drop-out and Children never attending school

In order to reduce and to recover out-of-school pre-schoolers and school children it is essential to strictly monitor school participation as well as truancy, drop-out and children never attending school. In disadvantaged communities, where these phenomena are more frequent, there is declining respect for every child's right to education. Public awareness campaigns on the importance of education must equally target parents, the public opinion and all school stakeholders: students, teachers, management, and support staff. Moreover, schools and local authorities also need to be made accountable while local cooperation organizations should be consolidated to also involve school and health mediators, informal community leaders, child protection structures, and representatives of NGO's that run relevant local projects (Sarău, 2011).

From this angle, it is very important for schools to also monitor the situation of children caught in circulatory migration. At national level, it is timely to introduce a fly gradebook/academic passport for those children who often accompany their parents to work in other European countries or in their home countries in order to recognise the grades attended/finished and some courses followed during the respective school year (even marks). With certificates issued to document the school record of the leaving/arriving/returning student, s/he can easily move from one education system to another (Sarău, 2011).

Appropriate Human Resources Training on a Curriculum Adapted to the Needs of Children at Risk of Dropping Out

The current appraisal system pushes teachers towards producing students that perform well at national tests. On the other hand, the education level of students from socially and economically challenged settings is way under the national average in terms of performance and any kind of progress they make is difficult to measure unless it matches national standards. Moreover, teacher training programmes focused on working with low-opportunity students (differential teaching, formative and individual progress-centred appraisal, positive approach, etc.) are insufficiently developed.

Because of all these, most often teachers get a feeling of failure as, despite their attempts, they don't manage to get the student to the national test-required performance standard. These test scores are decisive for a school's good or bad reputation and teachers feel mostly evaluated (formally or informally by their professional community) based on national scores. Developing relevant training programmes is not enough unless the current curriculum and the appraisal system take into consideration the existing differences in economic, social and cultural status and unless they come up with new ways of adjusting to the needs of low-opportunity children.

Projects that acknowledged the importance of curricular adjustment for drop-out and truancy prevention (for example, Educational Priority Areas promoted by IES and UNICEF Romania) delivered great results in this respect. Class-specific and catch-up teaching skills are insufficiently trained in initial training programmes, which mean that the outcomes of such projects should be systematically promoted in a context where the entire curricular framework (curricula and syllabuses) is under reform and the importance of school-decided curriculum is reconsidered.

Recent surveys (Voicu, 2010; Duminičă, 2011) indicate that school could catalyse those determinants that help retain students in the system, and the teachers who are constantly in touch with students play a special role in this. They may identify and diagnose student problems early on, ask for support from qualified authorities and start a successful early intervention.

From this perspective, it is crucial to recognise the importance of and the required skills for working with children at risk of dropping out and to enhance the prestige of teachers who work in the schools where most of these children learn. This recognition must reflect both in the wages and in other incentives for these teachers (funding research projects in these schools, facilitating experience exchanges with schools catering in similar settings, allocating additional teaching resources, etc.). Teachers' motivation is important for them to take on new responsibilities besides those strictly related to the subject matter they teach.

Valorising School-Parents Partnership and Increasing School Attractiveness

As we have seen, the main drop-out causes are the student's family features. The income level at the brink of survival, the low level of education, the lack of a stable job and the very low expectations regarding their children's education are major risk factors. Hence, the families of the children at risk of dropping out need to be engaged in school activities, in an open and relevant partnership. More precisely, parents may be involved in extracurricular event planning and may benefit from counseling or professional training services. This may add a new meaning to the partnership with the family as currently schools often turn for support to a handful of parents whose children are not at risk.

From this perspective, alternative parenting programmes should be encouraged and they should promote issues regarding parent-school/teacher communication as well as parent involvement in school decision making. In addition, with support from local authorities – in charge of covering running costs – school teams should be championed in their initiatives of making school more attractive to all student groups. Initiatives like *Inclusive School* or *Friendly School* may significantly enhance the feeling of belonging and the self-esteem of students who many times don't relate to the school they attend. The experience of programmes such as PHARE Access to Education, Equal Opportunities or Educational Priority Areas comes to prove that engaging students at risk of drop-out into extracurricular activities and stimulating student-teacher and parent-teacher communication are highly important to the success of drop-out prevention work. In contrast, where students' academic attainment is constantly looked down on, a feeling of aversion towards school environment may arise and may be decisive for leaving school.

Administrative and Management Capacities

The poor cooperation between the institutions responsible for delivering public educational and social care services leads to insufficient focus on people at risk of social exclusion, who are most in need of these services and whose vulnerability comes out of their reduced capacity to negotiate and their sporadic or difficult access to social care services.

As far as this goes, there is a need to build up the administrative capacity to implement programmes addressing the issues of socially and economically disadvantaged communities as well as to deliver services targeted at their population. A first priority is to develop decision makers' and administrative staff's competences at national and local levels regarding their capacity to design and implement public policies and to manage different programmes¹⁴.

At present, public policy development faces major shortcomings – especially poor inter-institutional coordination as regards common problem solving, limited consultation with stakeholders, inaccurate estimation of the efforts and capacities needed to draw up well-documented reform proposals, frequent legal framework changes and the high number of citizen regulations. These barriers are also noticed in the policies promoted at local, county or national level to advance school participation and to prevent or fight drop-out.

Thus, at the level of schools it has become a priority to develop principals' managerial experience in order to allow them to take over and fulfil the new responsibilities deriving from the decentralisation of education. Unfortunately, the weak cooperation between local governments and schools leads to school issues being constantly left out of the local decision-making agenda. Hence, management teams must also build their capacity to organise and facilitate local structures¹⁵. To this end, training and

¹⁴Framework-Document for Implementing the Operational Programme *Administrative Capacity Development*, October 2009, p8.

¹⁵ Sectoral Analysis of Educational Issues, conducted in the document compiled by the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, *Operational Programme Administrative Capacity Development 2007-2013*, September 2007, p19.

professional development programmes must be adapted and better matched to individual and institutional beneficiaries' needs and concerns.

Reasonable Funding for Social and Educational Programmes

Evidence-based systematic impact assessments of current social and educational policy funding could facilitate swift reactions from decentralised local authorities and deconcentrated services and could increase trust in people and institutions and their social efficiency.

As we have seen in previous chapters, there is a direct link between resources available (at family, school, community level, etc.) and the risk of non-attendance or drop-out. The economic reasons are some of the main drop-out causes which requires above all, in a time of crisis, the sensible use of existing resources. Unfortunately, in the absence of systematic impact assessments, most of the times current investments and priorities cannot be improved. For example, the funds that local governments allocate to education from the state budget cannot incorporate standard costing or correction indicators so long as these funds are exclusively devoted to staff or scholarship-related expenditures. Therefore, diversifying funding schemes and, more particularly, correlating institutional performance to the level of allocated resources in a clearer, more transparent manner are priorities for the current administrative reform and education decentralisation processes.

Another priority is the modern organisation and management of social services in general and of educational ones in particular and building capacities to locally absorb national and European funds as well as funds from other external sources. Given the limited resources, European funds (for example those available through structural programmes on human resources development – SOP HRD) are a major resource both for educational establishments and for the organizations that play an active role in supporting low-opportunity children and families.

b. Specific Recommendations for Identified Categories

Incentives for increasing Roma Participation to Education

Despite several targeted policies conducted since early 90's in Romania, Roma school attendance continues to be an important challenge, demonstrating the complexity of the problems addressed. *The School Mediator's Guidelines* (Sarău and Radu, 2011) indicate several intervention priorities for enhancing the effects of existing policies, including:

- Carrying on and developing programmes to train and co-opt Roma human resources into the education system: Roma school mediators, teachers, Romani language and literature/Roma history and traditions methodologists, advancing a network of mentors/tutors to provide educational assistance to Roma high school students admitted on dedicated 9th grade places;

- Training non-Roma teachers working with Roma students and children on the educational Romanipen profile, Roma fundamental values, non-discrimination and non-segregation in school;
- Enhancing Roma school attendance also by motivating them to attend lessons of Romani language as a mother tongue or even to study entirely in this language;
- Encouraging Roma lower secondary students to attend high school and university by *providing dedicated places to Roma applicants upon their admission to high schools and universities; granting scholarships* for Roma medical staff;
- Carrying out special training programmes for school principals and school mediators in Roma-majority schools to reduce truancy and drop-out.

The guidelines also point to other priority interventions for Roma students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out, which are consistent with the findings of this report. The most important ones refer to banning Roma segregation in the Romanian education system and promoting (historical/ethnic, linguistic/cultural/religious/gender/physical, etc.) diversity. Basically, they promote the idea of efficiently monitoring the observance of current regulations *banning Roma children's school segregation* and *approving the methodology for preventing and addressing Roma children's school segregation* against the backdrop of educational establishment reconfiguration. This intervention should be carefully analysed given that some Roma parents think that it would be preferable for their children to learn in Roma-exclusive schools (Surdu, 2011) and that there are other barriers pointed out in the anti-segregation policy evaluation report (Surdu, 2008) conducted in 2008, which didn't produce noteworthy results, being either ignored or little known in schools.

In this context, it is also important to carry on with the measures that provide assistance to the children who haven't attended kindergarten and are about to start 1st grade, such as: 3 to 4-week *1st Grade Prep Summer Kindergartens* or the *Summer Kindergarten* meant to make children accustomed to preschool education (and later direct them towards kindergarten) where teaching is also done in Romani language (based on a bilingual approach: Romani – Romanian, Romani – Hungarian).

Measures for Children from Poor Families

A first solution frequently mentioned in various surveys and research is to improve the economic situation in the families of the students at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out. There is obviously a strong connection between the family's economic status and a student's likelihood of dropping out at some point or of being left out of the education system. Social campaigns, aimed at offsetting poverty, play a major role in bringing to and keeping children in school. Unfortunately, the state allocates extremely small resources to such campaigns and they remain quite inefficient (ICCV, 2011). The main financial support measure for students – social scholarships – doesn't rise to the needs of children from poor families. Recent measures set forth in the Education Act must be systematically applied, monitored and evaluated, taking into account the fact that at present the number of granted scholarships is estimated to be at least three times inferior to the real needs.

At the same time, teacher training programmes should address the current tendency of paying regard to the student's socioeconomic status during the appraisal. Given that academic failure (for example, frequent grade retention) is one of the major factors contributing to drop-out, developing teachers' skills on teaching methods adapted to these children's needs constitutes a priority.

In addition, some teachers have embraced the stereotype that uneducated parents are not interested in school and in their child's academic pathway. Nonetheless, recent studies (Surdu, 2011; Voicu, 2009) show that, although this statement is often mentioned as a cause to drop-out, in reality things couldn't be more different: the lower the education level of family members is, the more interest they take in school and their child's participation in educational activities. Thus, research findings indicate that illiterate parents are three times more numerous to express a positive attitude towards school and education than the other parents(Surdu, 2011).

Measures for Children from Rural Area

Both national and international assessments point to a significant academic attainment discrepancy between students from urban areas and those from rural areas. As seen in Chapter 1, the discrepancy between the two areas of residence reflects in lower school attendance rates in rural communities. Also considering the fact that for several decades qualified teachers preferred to work mostly in an urban area-situated school, we notice that this gap is impossible to narrow without the systematic promotion of policies that enhance the quality of education in rural settings.

Once again, investments in human and material resources are crucial but their level needs to be transparently correlated to a significant added value. In this context, it is recommended to use the *educational risk mapping* tool providing an undistorted picture of an institution's performance according to the context where it operates (ARACIP, 2011).

From this perspective, the priority is to assist low-resource local governments from remote areas to fulfil current responsibilities and to support the project aimed at improving educational quality. Without this support, key programmes, such as employment of school mediators, provision of school transport or supply of equipment and teaching materials, are not possible.

Measures for Children with Special Educational Needs

Chapter 2 to this report presented a brief overview of major challenges regarding the education of children with SEN: a shortage of specialised staff that can identify children with SEN (school counsellors, support teachers, speech therapists); the lack of a coherent initial assessment system for the early identification of children with SEN; the number of children with SEN integrated into mainstream schools left out of national statistics; children with learning difficulties who are not officially recognised are not included in statistics, are not monitored and often don't benefit from supportive services; fearing labelling or out of indifference, some parents don't engage in the child assessment and special educational needs identification process.

Priority measures must focus on supplying support staff and addressing current differences between counties (from less than 10 support teachers/county to more than 100). At the same time, access of rural schools to support teachers and auxiliary support staff (school counsellors, school psychologists, speech therapists, etc.) should be reviewed.

Particularly as regards children with SEN integrated in mass education, there is still a great need for training on working with these children. Competences on inclusive education and efficient approach to children with special educational needs are lacking and in some counties teachers haven't yet benefited from any training in this department. Moreover, related training offers need to be diversified as right now they only partially match the needs of the teachers who work with these children.

A priority remains improving the physical infrastructure of schools which is currently insufficiently adapted to ensure access and appropriate schooling to students suffering from different types of physical disabilities and has few means to ensure adequate spacing for individual work with students with SEN. What is equally needed is to continue the programmes aimed at outfitting counselling and speech therapy offices, including with teaching materials needed when working with children with SEN (worksheets, ancillaries, special notebooks, etc.), which are almost inexistent right now, and with information resources on learning difficulties and working with children with SEN which are presently scarce.

*
* *

We won't conclude before making one last recommendation. Most measures aimed at combating drop-out phenomena which have been recently proposed and endorsed at national level are centred on coercive methods. For example, the provisions laid down in the Education Act 1/2011 prescribe that "the parent or legal guardian must take measures for the student's schooling throughout compulsory education years." (Art. 86, paragraph 3), and failure to conform to this paragraph entails a fine sanction or community service. Police involvement in the fight against drop-out is already a relatively common practice, especially in the rural communities that don't benefit from the services of a school mediator or a psychologist.

This approach could turn drop-out into a crime-related issue, especially without a clear definition of the term, and may generate abuses and discrimination. Moreover, imposing financial coercions on social groups living in extreme poverty is counterproductive, and the "community service" solution may lead, under conditions of poverty, to a slide into "forced labour". From the perspective of Romanian decision-making authorities, the response to drop-out must be paired with adequate support measures so that this obligation may be assumed and fulfilled. Without such assistance, punitive measures will aggravate drop-out triggers even more, cancelling out the measures that are based on an equal partnership between school and family and replicating the effects of affirmative measures that are not regarded as rights that come with duties.

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ANNEX

Table 1: Percentage of students of pre-primary age in pre-primary or primary education, by gender and other characteristics

Year		Not attending school	Attending pre-primary school	Attending primary school	Attending either pre-primary or primary
		Male			
	Residence				
2005/06	Urban	16.25	77.48	6.28	83.75
	Rural	23.49	68.89	7.17	76.06
	Total	20.36	72.88	6.76	79.64
		Female			
	Residence				
	Urban	14.34	78.79	6.83	85.62
	Rural	22.56	69.85	7.59	77.44
	Total	17.86	74.00	7.24	81.24
2006/07		Male			
	Residence				
	Urban	17.66	76.92	5.42	82.34
	Rural	22.07	71.69	6.24	77.93
	Total	19.98	74.17	5.85	80.02
		Female			
	Residence				
Urban	15.21	78.61	6.18	84.79	
Rural	20.81	72.47	6.72	79.19	
	Total	18.15	75.39	6.46	81.85
2007/08		Male			
	Residence				
	Urban	15.46	79.62	4.92	84.54
	Rural	22.18	71.93	5.89	77.82
	Total	18.91	75.67	5.42	81.09
		Female			
	Residence				
Urban	13.72	80.73	5.56	86.28	
Rural	20.89	72.85	6.26	79.11	
	Total	17.41	76.67	5.92	82.59
2008/09		Male			
	Residence				
	Urban	15.99	79.32	4.70	84.01
	Rural	22.17	72.43	5.40	77.83
	Total	19.09	75.87	8.05	80.91
		Female			
	Residence				
Urban	14.39	80.47	5.14	85.61	
Rural	20.45	73.63	5.92	79.55	
	Total	17.43	77.04	5.53	82.57
2009/10		Male			
	Residence				
	Urban	16.79	78.98	4.23	83.21
	Rural	20.86	74.20	5.12	79.14
	Total	18.76	76.58	4.66	81.24
		Female			
	Residence				
Urban	15.71	79.60	4.69	84.29	
Rural	19.19	75.15	5.66	80.81	
	Total	17.40	77.44	5.16	82.60

Source: INS

Table 2: Percentage of children attending school, by age and level of education

	Pre-pr.	Primary	L. Sec.	Upper Sec.	Post-Sec.	Total	Pre-pr.	Primary	L. Sec.	Upper Sec.	Post-Sec.	Total	Pre-pr.	Primary	L. Sec.	Upper Sec.	Post-Sec.	Total	Pre-pr.	Primary	L. Sec.	Upper Sec.	Post-Sec.	Total	Pre-pr.	Primary	L. Sec.	Upper Sec.	Post-Sec.	Total
M	2005/2006						2006/2007						2007/2008						2008/2009						2009/2010					
3	53.43					53.43	56.87					56.87	60.60					60.60	62.27					62.27	61.71					61.71
4	74.55					74.55	75.35					75.35	79.25					79.25	78.82					78.82	78.99					78.99
5	85.83					85.83	85.11					85.11	85.09					85.09	86.18					86.18	86.47					86.47
6	76.56	26.40				102.96	78.66	22.34				101.00	77.80	21.30				99.10	76.68	20.34				97.02	79.73	19.16			98.89	
7	5.36	91.33				96.69	5.75	90.45				96.20	5.91	89.46				95.37	5.80	90.61				96.41	6.30	89.11			95.40	
8		98.94				98.94		95.14				95.14		94.86				94.86		93.85				93.85		94.39			94.39	
9		98.54				98.54		100.36				100.36		95.69				95.69		95.53				95.53		95.08			95.08	
10		87.86	10.36			98.22		86.97	10.07			97.04		75.21	23.82			99.03		75.13	19.93			95.06		78.52	17.27		95.79	
11		15.01	82.42			97.43		15.08	82.83			97.91		11.10	84.60			95.71		11.81	86.07			97.89		11.55	82.78		94.34	
12		7.38	93.43			100.81		6.91	91.84			98.75		7.05	92.62			99.67		6.65	91.44			98.10		6.25	94.19		100.44	
13			92.69			92.69			94.34			94.34			91.79			91.79			92.77			92.77			92.73		92.73	
14			84.47	9.75		94.22			82.19	7.84		90.03			83.65	7.79		91.44			81.82	7.71		89.53			82.72	8.90	91.62	
15			14.30	63.96		78.25			17.48	72.28		89.76			16.74	69.64		86.39			16.79	73.19		89.97			16.11	70.98	87.08	
16			7.99	75.77		83.76			7.79	67.43		75.22			9.93	77.88		87.81			9.94	74.24		84.18			10.77	77.04	87.81	
17				69.83		69.83				70.73		70.73				63.31		63.31				75.22		75.22				72.75	72.75	
>17				21.78	2.19	23.97				25.66	1.47	27.13				29.21	1.71	30.92				28.86	2.21	31.07				31.53	2.65	34.18
F	2005/2006						2006/2007						2007/2008						2008/2009						2009/2010					
3	56.65					56.65	59.42					59.42	63.02					63.02	64.42					64.42	64.50					64.50
4	75.49					75.49	78.16					78.16	79.79					79.79	80.28					80.28	80.26					80.26
5	86.26					86.26	85.78					85.78	87.39					87.39	87.38					87.38	87.49					87.49
6	76.36	28.05				104.41	77.71	24.64				102.35	76.64	23.16				99.80	76.51	22.48				98.99	77.97	21.12			99.09	
7	4.86	92.41				97.27	5.24	90.37				95.60	5.16	90.12				95.28	5.11	90.17				95.28	5.34	90.70			96.04	
8		97.62				97.62		95.32				95.32		93.95				93.95		93.94				93.94		93.39			93.39	
9		98.50				98.50		99.57				99.57		96.02				96.02		94.46				94.46		94.74			94.74	
10		86.69	11.21			97.90		86.08	11.14			97.22		71.41	26.24			97.65		73.33	22.07			95.40		75.07	19.43		94.50	
11		12.28	84.04			96.31		12.32	84.95			97.27		8.73	86.73			95.46		9.46	86.77			96.23		9.63	85.21		94.84	

12		4.66	94.01			98.66		4.19	92.19			96.38		4.43	93.39			97.83		4.09	92.72			96.82		3.91	93.52			97.43
13			93.37			93.37			94.31			94.31			91.92			91.92			93.41			93.41			93.01			93.01
14			84.44	12.01		96.46			82.10	9.74		91.84			82.80	9.08		91.87			81.21	9.78		90.99			81.73	10.52		92.25
15			10.17	69.41		79.58			13.18	78.23		91.42			12.62	74.56		87.17			12.66	77.34		89.99			12.38	76.14		88.52
16			4.03	79.36		83.40			3.86	70.68		74.55			5.11	81.95		87.06			5.23	77.31		82.55			5.86	79.13		84.99
17				74.70		74.70				73.86		73.86				66.27		66.27				79.41		79.41				75.65		75.65
>17				19.90	4.35	24.25				22.77	4.03	26.79				25.93	4.93	30.87				25.94	5.75	31.69				27.97	7.19	35.16
T	2005/2006					2006/2007					2007/2008					2008/2009					2009/2010									
3	54.98					54.98	58.11					58.11	61.77					61.77	63.31					63.31	63.06					63.06
4	75.01					75.01	76.71					76.71	79.51					79.51	79.53					79.53	79.61					79.61
5	86.04					86.04	85.43					85.43	86.20					86.20	86.76					86.76	86.97					86.97
6	76.46	27.20				103.67	78.20	23.46				101.66	77.24	22.21				99.44	76.60	21.37				97.97	78.87	20.11				98.99
7	5.11	91.86				96.97	5.50	90.41				95.91	5.55	89.78				95.33	5.46	90.40				95.86	5.83	89.88				95.71
8		98.30				98.30		95.23				95.23		94.41				94.41		93.89				93.89		93.90				93.90
9		98.52				98.52		99.97				99.97		95.85				95.85		95.01				95.01		94.92				94.92
10		87.29	10.77			98.06		86.54	10.59			97.13	73.35	25.00				98.36		74.25	20.97			95.23		76.83	18.33			95.16
11		13.68	83.21			96.88		13.73	83.87			97.60		9.95	85.64			95.59		10.66	86.42			97.08		10.62	83.96			94.58
12		6.05	93.71			99.76		5.58	92.01			97.59		5.77	93.00			98.77		5.41	92.07			97.47		5.11	93.86			98.97
13			93.02			93.02			94.33			94.33			91.85			91.85			93.08			93.08			92.87			92.87
14			84.46	10.85		95.31			82.15	8.77		90.91			83.23	8.42		91.65			81.52	8.72		90.25			82.24	9.69		91.93
15			12.27	66.63		78.90			15.39	75.18		90.57			14.73	72.04		86.77			14.77	75.22		89.98			14.29	73.49		87.78
16			6.04	77.54		83.58			5.86	69.02		74.89			7.58	79.86		87.44			7.64	75.74		83.38			8.37	78.06		86.43
17				72.21		72.21				72.27		72.27				64.76		64.76				77.26		77.26				74.17		74.17
> 17				20.87	3.24	24.11				24.25	2.72	26.96				27.61	3.29	30.89				27.43	3.95	31.37				29.79	4.87	34.66

Note: For the ages of 6 and 12 years the values exceed 100% because the data on the children enrolled in the respective levels of education (pre-primary and primary) refer to the population of “X years and over” and the respective number relates to the population of “X years”.

Source: INS

Table 3: Adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER), by gender and level of education, with GPI

2005/2006				
Level of education	Male	Female	Total	GPI (M/F)
Primary school	96.73	96.60	96.67	1.00
Lower secondary	96.18	96.15	96.16	1.00
2006/2007				
Primary school	95.71	95.59	95.65	1.00
Lower secondary	95.11	94.85	94.98	1.00
2007/2008				
Primary school	94.72	94.41	94.57	1.01
Lower secondary	94.56	94.19	94.38	1.00
2008/2009				
Primary school	93.79	93.53	93.66	1.00
Lower secondary	94.47	94.30	94.36	1.00
2009/2010				
Primary school	93.66	93.38	93.52	1.00
Lower secondary	94.73	94.36	94.55	1.00

Source: INS

Table 4: Number of children out of school, by age group and gender

2005/2006	Male	Female	Total
Primary school age	14843	14666	29509
Lower secondary school age	19330	18554	37884
2006/2007			
Primary school age	19467	19062	38529
Lower secondary school age	23868	23999	47867
2007/2008			
Primary school age	23938	24101	48039
Lower secondary school age	25635	26086	51721
2008/2009			
Primary school age	28090	27829	55919
Lower secondary school age	25431	24972	50403
2009/2010			
Primary school age	28220	27885	56105
Lower secondary school age	23882	24306	48188

Source: INS

Table 5: Percentage of out-of-school (dropped out) children across primary and lower secondary school ages

Year	Dimension 2 Primary age			Dimension 3 Lower secondary age		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2005-2006	1.70	1.30	1.50	2.30	1.80	2.10
2006/2007	1.90	1.50	1.70	2.50	2.10	2.30
2007/2008	2.00	1.50	1.80	2.50	2.00	2.20
2008/2009	1.60	1.30	1.40	2.00	1.80	1.90
2009/2010	1.60	1.30	1.40	1.80	1.50	1.70

Source: INS

Table 6: Percentage and number of primary school age children out of school, by age and gender (%)

Year	Age	Male		Female		Total	
		%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
2005/2006	7	8.67	9958	7.59	8252	8.14	18210
	8	1.06	1174	2.38	2500	1.70	3674
	9	1.46	1679	1.50	1633	1.48	3312
	10	1.78	2032	2.10	2281	1.94	4313
2006/2007	7	9.55	10879	9.63	10490	9.59	21369
	8	4.86	5585	4.68	5089	4.77	10674
	9	1.90	2152	1.69	1803	1.80	3955
	10	2.96	3397	2.78	3027	2.87	6424
2007/2008	7	10.54	12072	9.88	10723	10.22	22795
	8	5.14	5857	6.05	6584	5.59	12441
	9	4.31	4941	3.98	4326	4.15	9267
	10	0.97	1068	2.35	2468	1.64	3536
2008/2009	7	9.39	10290	9.83	10223	9.6	20513
	8	6.15	7043	6.06	6576	6.11	13619
	9	4.47	5092	5.54	6030	4.99	11122
	10	4.94	5665	4.60	5000	4.77	10665
2009/2010	7	10.89	11655	9.30	9327	10.12	20982
	8	5.61	6141	6.61	6871	6.10	13012
	9	4.92	5629	5.26	5703	5.08	11332
	10	4.21	4795	5.50	5984	4.84	10779
2005/2006	Total	3.27	14843	3.40	14666	3.33	29509
2006/2007		4.29	19467	4.41	19062	4.35	38529
2007/2008		5.28	23938	5.59	24101	5.43	48039
2008/2009		6.21	28090	6.47	27829	6.34	55919
2009/2010		6.34	28220	6.62	27885	6.48	56105

Source: INS

Table 7: Percentage of lower secondary school age children out of school, by age and gender

Year	Age	Male		Female		Total	
		%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
2005/2006	11	2.57	3122	3.69	4262	3.12	7384
	12	...	...	...	...	...	...
	13	7.31	9606	6.63	8326	6.98	17932
	14	5.78	7586	3.54	4413	4.69	11999
2006/2007	11	2.09	2382	2.73	2959	2.40	5341
	12	1.25	1517	3.62	4184	2.41	5701
	13	5.66	6871	5.69	6616	5.67	13487
	14	9.97	13098	8.16	10240	9.09	23338
2007/2008	11	4.29	4923	4.54	4944	4.41	9867
	12	0.33	372	2.17	2357	1.23	2729
	13	8.21	9950	8.08	9339	8.15	19289
	14	8.56	10390	8.13	9446	8.35	19836
2008/2009	11	2.11	2325	3.77	3960	2.92	6285
	12	1.90	2181	3.18	3466	2.53	5647
	13	7.23	8238	6.59	7141	6.92	15379
	14	10.47	12687	9.01	10405	9.75	23092
2009/2010	11	5.66	6493	5.16	5609	5.42	12102
	12	...	...	...	...	...	...
	13	7.27	8330	6.99	7603	7.13	15933
	14	8.38	9540	7.75	8394	8.07	17934
2005/2006	Total	3.82	19330	3.85	18554	3.84	37884
2006/2007		4.89	23868	5.15	23999	5.02	47867
2007/2008		5.44	25635	5.81	26086	5.62	51721
2008/2009		5.53	25431	5.70	24972	5.61	50403

2009/2010		5.27	23882	5.64	24306	5.45	48188
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Source: INS

Observation: 2005/2006 and 2009/2010 school year data for the male and total in the case of 12 years old children could not be calculated since the data collected from schools refers to children "12 years old and over" (as a consequence, the percentage of children of this age in school is higher than 100%)

Table 8: Percentage of new entrants to primary education with no ECCE experience

Year	Residence	Male	Female	Total
2005/2006	Urban	12.8	11.2	12.0
	Rural	14.6	12.9	13.7
	Total	13.7	12.1	12.9
2006/2007	Urban	11.6	9.1	9.7
	Rural	9.7	8.8	9.3
	Total	10.0	9.4	10.6
2007/2008	Urban	9.9	8.8	9.4
	Rural	8.4	8.0	8.2
	Total	9.1	8.4	8.8
2008/2009	Urban	10.7	9.0	9.9
	Rural	9.3	8.1	8.7
	Total	10.0	8.5	9.3
2009/2010	Urban	10.8	9.0	9.9
	Rural	8.5	7.3	7.9
	Total	9.6	8.1	8.9

Source: INS

Table 9: Repetition rate at the primary and lower secondary level of education by grade and area of residence

Year	Residence	Grade							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2005/2006	Urban	2.3	1.5	0.8	1	2.8	2.3	2.8	1.9
	Rural	5.5	3	1.4	1.9	3.8	2.6	2.7	2.2
	Total	4.0	2.3	1.2	1.5	3.3	2.5	2.7	2.0
2006/2007	Urban	0.7	1.1	1.1	0.8	2.9	2.2	2.4	1.8
	Rural	1.1	2.1	1.8	1.5	3.8	2.3	2.4	1.9
	Total	0.9	1.6	1.5	1.2	3.3	2.2	2.4	1.8
2007/2008	Urban	0.5	1.7	1.1	1.3	2.6	2.4	2.8	1.8
	Rural	0.9	3.5	2.0	2.5	3.3	2.7	3.1	2.1
	Total	0.7	2.6	1.5	1.9	3.0	2.5	2.9	2.0
2008/2009	Urban	0.4	1.7	1.1	1.1	3.5	1.9	2.7	1.6
	Rural	1.0	3.4	2.2	2.2	4.8	2.3	2.9	1.9
	Total	0.7	2.6	1.7	1.7	4.1	2.1	2.8	1.8
2009/2010	Urban	0.5	1.7	1.2	1.1	3.1	2.4	2.2	1.5
	Rural	1.2	3.7	2.3	2.4	4.6	3.2	2.6	2.0
	Total	0.9	2.7	1.8	1.8	3.8	2.8	2.4	1.7

Source: INS

Table 10: Dropout rate at the primary and lower secondary level of education, by grade and area of residence

Year	Residence	Grade							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2005/2006	Urban	2.4	1.5	1.2	1.4	2.7	2.0	1.8	1.5
	Rural	2.1	1.3	1.1	1.2	2.5	1.8	2.3	2.1
	Total	2.2	1.4	1.2	1.3	2.6	1.9	2.0	1.8
2006/2007	Urban	2.6	2.0	1.9	1.7	2.9	2.2	2.1	1.9
	Rural	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.2	2.7	2.0	2.4	2.1
	Total	2.1	1.7	1.6	1.5	2.8	2.1	2.2	2
2007/2008	Urban	2.0	1.5	1.4	1.2	2.4	1.7	1.9	1.5
	Rural	2.3	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.9	2.3	2.8	2.4
	Total	2.2	1.6	1.6	1.6	2.6	2.0	2.3	1.9

2008/2009	Urban	2.2	1.1	1.0	1.1	2.6	1.4	1.5	1.1
	Rural	2.1	1.4	1.2	1.4	3.0	1.8	2.2	1.9
	Total	2.1	1.3	1.1	1.3	2.8	1.6	1.8	1.5
2009/2010	Urban	2.4	1.2	1.1	1.2	2.5	1.5	1.2	1.1
	Rural	2.3	1.3	1.1	1.1	2.4	1.6	1.7	1.6
	Total	2.3	1.2	1.1	1.2	2.5	1.5	1.4	1.3

Table 11: Survival rate to the last grade of primary education and to the last grade of lower secondary education

	2005/2006				2006/2007				2007/2008				2008/2009				2009/2010			
	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI
Survival rate to the last grade of primary education	93.3	94.9	94.1	1.02	91.6	93.5	92.5	1.02	92.3	93.0	92.7	1.00	92.5	93.6	93.0	1.01	92.5	93.6	93.0	1.01
Survival rate to the last grade of lower secondary education	87.6	90.8	89.2	1.04	87.0	90.7	88.8	1.04	85.9	89.6	87.7	1.04	85.9	89.5	87.6	1.04	87.4	90.1	88.7	1.03

Source: INS

Table 12: Dropout rate from primary education, by gender and residence *Source: INS*

Year	Residence	Male	Female	Total
2005/2006	Urban	1.8	1.4	1.6
	Rural	1.5	1.3	1.4
	Total	1.7	1.3	1.5
2006/2007	Urban	2.3	1.8	2.1
	Rural	1.5	1.2	1.4
	Total	1.9	1.5	1.7
2007/2008	Urban	1.8	1.3	1.5
	Rural	2.1	1.8	2.0
	Total	2.0	1.5	1.8
2008/2009	Urban	1.5	1.1	1.3
	Rural	1.6	1.4	1.5
	Total	1.6	1.3	1.4
2009/2010	Urban	1.6	1.3	1.5
	Rural	1.6	1.3	1.4
	Total	1.6	1.3	1.4

Table 13: Dropout rate from lower secondary education, by gender and residence *Source: INS*

An	Residence	Male	Female	Total
2005/2006	Urban	2.3	1.6	2.0
	Rural	2.3	2.0	2.2
	Total	2.3	1.8	2.1
2006/2007	Urban	2.6	1.9	2.3
	Rural	2.5	2.2	2.3
	Total	2.5	2.1	2.3
2007/2008	Urban	2.2	1.5	1.9
	Rural	2.8	2.4	2.6
	Total	2.5	2.0	2.2
2008/2009	Urban	1.8	1.4	1.6
	Rural	2.3	2.1	2.2
	Total	2.0	1.8	1.9
2009/2010	Urban	1.8	1.3	1.6
	Rural	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Total	1.8	1.5	1.7

Table 14: Transition rate from primary to lower secondary education *Source: INS*

Year	Male	Female	Total	GPI
	from primary to lower secondary education			
2005/2006	97,9	97,9	97,9	1,0
2006/2007	98,1	97,7	97,9	1,0
2007/2008	97,1	96,9	97,0	1,0
2008/2009	98,5	97,8	98,2	0,99
2009/2010	98,3	97,6	97,9	0,99
	from lower secondary to upper secondary education			
2005/2006	89,9	91,7	90,8	1,02
2006/2007	89,5	91,3	90,4	1,02
2007/2008	92,0	93,2	92,6	1,01
2008/2009	93,2	94,7	93,9	1,02
2009/2010	92,6	93,0	92,8	1,00

Table 15. Children with disabilities out of school, by type of handicap, age group, gender and area of residence *Source: ANPC*

	3-6 years old	7-10 years old	11-14 years old	girls	boys	urban	rural	total
Mild handicap	364	23	33	193	227	184	236	420
Medium handicap	1490	364	393	1009	1238	1166	1081	2247
Severe handicap	1211 /	479/	521 /	926	1285	945	1266	2211
Very severe handicap	3805	2454	2369	3734	4894	3761	4867	8628

ANNEX 2. Education system structure for the reference period of the report (2005-2010)

Starting Age (national)	Starting age (ISCED)	Grade/Group	ISCED	Educational Level			Qualification Level	
>18-19	>18-19		6	University Education			5	
			5				4	
			4	Non-university tertiary education Post high school			3	
18-19	19	XIII	3			Technological high school	3	
17-18	18	XII		Theoretical high school	Technological high school			
16-17	17	XI				Extra year		2
15-16	16	C O M P U L S O R Y	2	Theoretical education	Vocational high school (arts, sports, theology)	Technological education	Vocational Education (School of Arts and Trades)	1
14-15	15								IX
13-14	14			VIII				
Dec-13	13			VII				
11-Dec	12			VI				
10-Nov	11			V				
09-Oct	10			IV				
08-Sep	9			III				
07-Aug	8			II				
06-Jul	7			I				
05-Jun	6	Preparatory year Group 3 Group 2 Group 1	0	Pre-primary Education				
	5							
04-May	4							
03-Apr	3							
			1	Primary Education				

ANNEX 3. Overview of data sources

For the out-of-school child data, multiple sources were used, as presented hereinafter.

a. Exhaustive survey in all public and private educational establishments in Romania. The survey is based on research tools (questionnaires) agreed by the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Institute of Statistics and it is conducted at the beginning and the end of the school year. The data are collected from all types of educational establishments and from all levels of education in October-November each year, relating both the beginning of the current school year and the end of the previous school year. The survey – conducted yearly – is run by the National Institute of Statistics.

Sample design and data collection coverage: National, macro-regional, regional, county

The smallest administrative area for which out-of-school population statistics are statistically accurate: Town/commune

Types of potential data disaggregation: The data on school population is collected/disaggregated by gender, age, teaching language, area of residence (urban/rural), level of education, geographic area, type of school (public, private), grade. For some indicators, other types of disaggregation may be used: i.e. by specialisations/qualifications, ethnic origin, Romanian students/foreign students, etc.

The data collected from public and private educational establishments based on the questionnaires are aggregated by educational stages (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, vocational, post-secondary and tertiary) in line with the organisational structure of the national education system in Romania.

Some results are available on the website of the National Institute of Statistics. Other results are published yearly by the National Institute of Statistics in statistical reviews such as: Primary and Lower Secondary Education (beginning and end of school year), Upper Secondary Education, Special Education or in syntheses such as The Education System of Romania, Yearly Romanian Statistical Book, etc.

At request, the National Institute of Statistics database (TEMPO) can also be accessed.

All questionnaires are available in word and excel formats at the following address:

http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/chest_invatamant.ro.do;jsessionid=0a02458c30d5b04e2de915d245cdac869a0b34388175.e38QbxesAhYTbi0Lbxz0

The definition of an **out-of-school child** used in the survey is the following: a child who is enrolled but stops attending the classes during a specific school year.

Definitions of other educational terms:

- **School entrance age:** School entrance age in the reference period of the report varies from one level of education to another. School entrance age for pre-primary education is 3 years, for primary education is 6/7 years, for lower secondary education is 11 years and for upper secondary education is 15 years.
- **Enrolment:** all children, pupils and students (included in the educational and training process) during a school/university year regardless of the type of education attended (day, evening, part-time education and distance learning) and of age.
- **Attendance:** the total number of pupils/students of a certain age group, regardless of the level of education in which they are included, expressed as a share in the total population of the same age group.
- **Drop-out:** Drop-out rate is an indicator defined as the difference between the number of students school population enrolled at the beginning of the school year and the number of students enrolled at the end of the year, divided by the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the school year, multiplied by 100.

- **Educational attainment:** The highest educational level attended by a person (primary, secondary, tertiary)
- **Other relevant terms:** the total number of pupils/students of a certain age group, regardless of the level of education in which they are included, expressed as a share in the total population of the same age group.

b. The second important source for the report, in relation with the data on the economic background of the students of the five dimensions analysed, is the **Household Budget Survey (HBS)**. The data are collected each month on a sub-sample of 3,120 households. The sampling unit is the household. Sampling (the smallest administrative area for which out-of-school population data are statistically accurate) or regional coverage of schools (NUTS-II level).

The National Institute of Statistics is in charge of the data collection process (data collection management). The periodicity of data is Quarterly and Annually.

The data may be disaggregated by gender, age, area, wealth quintile.

The definition of out-of-school children used in this survey is the following: school-age population with other occupational status than that of students.

The collected, processed and aggregated statistical data are published and disseminated on a quarterly and yearly basis. This information may be accessed by any interested institution. The general public may consult these publications.

Limitations arising from the specificity of the questionnaire:

- The students who never attended pre-primary education could not be accurately identified; this situation is due to the fact that in the case of the information regarding the family members' current status the answer options in the questionnaire do not include the status *enrolled in kindergarten*.
- For family members who are over 15 years of age, the school enrolment situation cannot be accurately detected as the data collection tool focuses on their situation on the labour market (employed/unemployed) and not on their school situation (enrolled/not enrolled in education).

c. Additional sources of data were used for filling in the information not covered by the sources quoted above. In particular relevant data on **specific categories of children** and **on specific issues** for the report were consulted such as: situation of children with disabilities, Roma children participation to education, PISA international assessments results, ad-hoc survey on drop-out registration etc.). Also relevant official reports of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and National Authority for Child Protection were consulted. All these sources are indicated in the analysis, while a complete list of the additional sources is indicated in the bibliographical section of the report.

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